Marianne Skinner
1796

AGATHA;

OR,

A Narrative OF Recent Events.

A NOVEL,

In three Volumes,

VOL. II.

Bid them be chaste, be innocent, like thee;
Bid them in dutys Sphere as meekly move —
Mason

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BRITISH MUSEUM

AGATHA.

CHAP. I.

SOME days now paſſed in which nothing new occurred. Lady Belmont by degrees grew more impatient to know the event of Agatha's reflections. She watched every turn of her countenance with eager and inquiſitive anxiety, yet did not dare to aſk, leſt the queſtion might imply a doubt of her acquieſcence. In order, however, to give her an opportunity of introducing the ſubject, ſhe never ſtarted any other, and with care avoided breaking ſilence, hoping that every one would terminate in the wiſhed yet dreaded explanation.

Agatha was no ſtranger to what paſſed in her mother's mind; ſhe ſaw her anxiety, and now convinced that however her heart might ſuffer, nothing could effect a change in her ſentiments, and aſſured that the reſolution ſhe had formed, dreadful as ſhe knew it to be, was founded on juſtice and duty, ſhe thought herſelf no longer juſtified in keeping her mother in a ſtate of doubt and ſuſpenſe from which it was in her power at once to free her. —After a night therefore in which ſhe revolved in her mind every idea which had before occurred, and every reaſoning which give riſe to her determination, ſhe aroſe, without having even thought of ſleep, pale, faint, and trembling, yet firm and decided in her purpoſe; and determined to make known to her mother in the courſe of the morning her obedience to her will. Yes! ſhe ſaid, looking at the ſun as it broke through the clouds into her apartment, before that ſun ſhall have reached its zenith, it ſhall behold me the obedient victim of my duty, and the verieſt wretch its beams illumine: loſt to friends—— to—all!—outcaſt of every earthly hope!

The

The wandering beggar as he journeys from door to door, and takes the ſcanty morſel, churliſh plenty with threats and cruel chidings, grants at laſt to his prayers, enjoys a Paradiſe compared to the lot awaiting me; for he is free to wander where he will: the ſun ſhines not on that country of which he is not lord, which he may not traverſe: he may drink of the brook, lie down upon its banks, and ariſe refreſhed, free, and happy: no vow compels him to renounce home—country—friends!—while I, a ſlave within the narrow precincts of thoſe walls, never—never to be repaſſed, ſhall linger out a miſerable exiſtence—a perpetual priſoner! O! freedom! liberty! happy, happy thoſe who are permitted to enjoy thy bleſſings! what others can they aſk?—Then falling on her knees, Father of mercies! ſhe ſaid, ſupport thy feeble child! Give her fortitude to ſuſtain the trial which it is thy will ſhe ſhould endure! for O! thy bleſſing only can make her equal to the conflict!—From this ſhort prayer ſhe aroſe greatly relieved, and ſenſible of a courage ſhe had before believed impoſſible. While

yet this laſted, ſhe determined to haſten to her mother, to pronounce the awful mandate, and ſeal at once her fate.

Inſpired by this newly-acquired though momentary reſolution, ſhe rather flew than ran down ſtairs; but when ſhe reached the door of the room where ſhe imagined her mother was, her ſpirits and ſtrength forſook her—ſhe walked back a few ſteps, leaned againſt the wall, and had neither power nor courage to advance. After a minute's pauſe, ſhe again approached the door; again ſhuddered and drew back. At laſt ſhe heard ſome one walking in the room: and dreading to ſee her whom ſhe came to ſeek, ſhe attempted to go again up ſtairs; but her knees tottered, and ſhe found ſhe was not able to walk. The door opened, and Agatha terrified, ſcreamed aloud.

"Why Lord have mercy upon me! Miſs," ſaid Hannah, who now came towards her, "you have ſcarred me out of my wits. I "had no notion of any body's being up ſo "ſoon as this, and I was juſt a duſting the "parlour as I heared your foot upon the "ſtairs."

"My

"My mother is not down then?" ſaid Agatha, recovering.

"No, Miſs—down? Why bleſs you it "ben't ſix o'clock; and I ſhould not have "been about my work ſo arly myſelf, only "I miſcounted the clock. You ſeems but "poorlieſh, Miſs, ſhall I get you a ſup of any "thing?"

"If you will fetch me a little water I ſhall "be obliged to you," ſaid Agatha.

Hannah then ran for the water, and as ſoon as ſhe returned with it, "Ah Miſs," ſhe ſaid, "you may ſay what you will, but its all along "of theſe naſty abominable nun notions that "makes you ſo badly; I'm ſure I'd do any "thing to keep you from any manner of "thing of the ſort—ſeeing a body ought to "do as they would be done by, you know; "and I ſhall be glad to ſarve you in your pri-"vate deſpondence with that gentleman or "any body elſe, if ſo be you wiſhes it."

Agatha thanked her, and aſſuring her that the uneaſineſs ſhe had remarked, proceeded from a cauſe with which ſhe was totally unacquainted, went up ſtairs again with her aſſiſtance,

and ſat in her own room to wait the hour of Lady Belmont's riſing.—She took up a book, endeavouring to baniſh the remembrance of her ſituation, and to think no more of the dreaded conſent ſhe meant to give, till ſhe was preſent with her mother, and the moment actually arrived. But though ſhe read the words of the author, they conveyed no ideas to her mind; and ſhe read the ſame page over and over again without being able to underſtand it.—Looking at her watch ſhe found it was now paſt eight, the hour when Lady Belmont uſually came down to breakfaſt; ſhe therefore left her room, more compoſed than ſhe had dared to hope, but endeavouring ſtill as much as poſſible to avoid reflection.

She found Sir Charles and Lady Belmont both in the breakfaſt room; and ſat down with them to breakfaſt with tolerable compoſure.—In about half an hour afterwards, Sir Charles left them to take a morning ride, and Lady Belmont remained alone with Agatha.

Agatha looked at her mother for ſome time, and opened her lips to ſpeak, but the words died upon her tongue. Lady Belmont remarked

remarked her manner, and looking at her with tenderneſs, "Surely," ſhe ſaid, "my "ſweet girl has ſomething ſhe wiſhes to ſay "to me?"

"O! I had," ſaid Agatha, trembling violently.

"Speak then, my beloved child—Am I "the happieſt, moſt bleſt of mothers that "ever drew breath, and my Agatha the no-"bleſt of women?"

"Yes," ſaid Agatha, riſing, folding her hands, and raiſing her eyes to Heaven, "I "do—I do devote myſelf to Heaven and "you! This world, and all that it contains, "here, from this moment, I renounce—for-"ſake for ever!——"

She heard ſomething fall, and, turning round, beheld Lady Belmont lifeleſs on the floor. Shocked and terrified, ſhe attempted to raiſe her, but finding her efforts ineffectual, ſhe rang the bell violently. A ſervant came. She deſired him to diſpatch ſome one in ſearch of her father, and to ſend Mrs. Wildys and whom ever elſe he firſt found to her inſtantly. Mrs. Wildys, Hannah, and

another female ſervant came immediately; and with their aſſiſtance Agatha raiſed her mother, and laid her on a ſopha. She then threw open all the windows and chafed her temples; but every thing proving ineffectual, ſhe ſent another ſervant for Dr. Harley.

Sir Charles now returned; and ſoon after he came, Lady Belmont began to revive. She attempted to ſpeak, but moſt of her words were unintelligible, and the few they could comprehend were incoherent.—By degrees, however, her ſpeech returned; but only to ſhock Sir Charles and Agatha by convincing them that her ſenſes were totally gone. "Where is my Agatha?" ſhe ſcreamed, "Give me my child—my innocent, ſacrificed "lamb! See—ſhe bleeds upon the altar!—" Then burſting into a convulſive laugh, "No, "ſhe does not," ſhe ſaid, "ſee Sir Charles, "ſee my love, ſhe is mounting to Heaven! "look at the white robe ſhe wears, ſee the "flowers—O! ſweet flowers!—And ſo ſhe "is dead? Well! Heaven be praiſed! But "'twas I that murdered her—it was indeed "—I put a knife into her heart, her very "heart—

" heart—but that knife had a key to it, and " nobody can unlock that gate. O! no— " ſhe's faſt for ever." Then laughing dreadfully again,—" but you know ſhe does get " out when ſhe dies." —Agatha in vain endeavoured to comfort her; " My dear mo- " ther," ſhe ſaid, " I am here—I am not " dead—I ſhall live long I hope to do all, " and every thing you wiſh." " You my " daughter!" ſhe returned! " no, wretch! " ſhe is not like you—ſhe is an angel of " light."

Dr. Harley, who was now arrived, adviſed them not to ſpeak to her, as all attempts to reſtore her reaſon would be vain for the preſent. He ordered her to be kept perfectly ſtill, and giving her a compoſing draught, adviſed that all but two attendants ſhould leave her: No entreaties, however, could prevail upon Agatha to go, ſhe therefore by his advice, went to a diſtant part of the room, removed from her ſight.

Lady Belmont continued to rave during the whole of the day, and great part of the night following; towards morning ſhe ſunk

into a ſleep, from which ſhe did not awake for fourteen hours; and when, at laſt, ſhe awoke, though ſhe ſpoke faint, ſhe appeared perfectly reaſonable. She aſked for her child. "I am here, my dear Madam," ſaid Agatha.

"How came I in bed, at this time, my "love?"

"You have been but poorly, you know; "and we thought it better for you."

"Ill have I been? I have no remem- "brance of it, nor any recollection how I "came here—but bleſs you, my ſweet child, "for the kind cares I am ſure you laviſhed "on me, while I was inſenſible of your ten- "derneſs."

In a few days Lady Belmont was perfectly recovered, and in the preſence of Agatha, informed Sir Charles that her requeſt was granted, and her child the nobleſt of human beings. Sir Charles appeared much affected, and folding Agatha in his arms, called her their angel.

"I have one requeſt," ſaid Agatha, "which your illneſs prevented my making

" to you that fatal morning; yet do not—do
" not refuſe it me."

" Can my beloved Agatha entertain a
" doubt of my conſent to whatever ſhe ſhall
" propoſe?" ſaid Lady Belmont: " No, un-
" heard I promiſe to grant it."

" It is then," ſaid Agatha, heſitating, " to
" ſee Mr. Hammond."

" To ſee Mr. Hammond? Good Heavens!"

" To ſee Mr. Hammond!" repeated Sir Charles at the ſame inſtant.

" Yes, and why ſhould you fear it? Is not
" the conſent I have given irrevocable? Yes,
" nothing ſhall call it back."

" But his entreaties, his artful inſinuations," ſaid Lady Belmont, " if they do not change
" your reſolution, may make you ſubmit to
" it with greater reluctance."

" Mr. Hammond is incapable of artifice;
" and a reſolution built on the firm founda-
" tion of deliberate reaſon, no blaſt, however
" ſevere, has power to ſhake."

" Shall you then inform him of what has
" paſſed, of the life to which neceſſity has
" deſtined you?"

" Perhaps not—I cannot tell; yet to ſee
" him once again before I quit him for ever
" is a conſolation no duty forbids."

" You ſhall then, my Agatha. My child
" ſhall never think that what I *could* grant
" was denied her. But you will not object
" to your father or me, or both, perhaps, be-
" ing preſent at the interview?"

" Yes, I muſt entreat, as the laſt favour I
" ſhall ever aſk, that I may ſee him alone.
" Wherefore theſe doubts? I do not deſerve
" them."

" Say no more—forgive them my Agatha!
" —it ſhall be as you deſire. And when
" would you wiſh him to come?"

" The day is immaterial—" replied Aga-
tha, ſighing deeply, " if I may know it be-
" forehand?"

" Surely.—We will aſk him to come to-
" morrow: Sir Charles ſhall write imme-
" diately."

Sir Charles then wrote the following note which he gave to Agatha for her approbation.

" Sir

"Sir Charles and Lady Belmont ſend compliments to Mr. Hammond. As they are going very ſoon to leave England to make a long reſidence in France, they, as well as their daughter, from reſpect to his late much-valued ſiſter, will be happy to ſee him any time tomorrow, to take their leave of him previous to their departure."

The note was ſent accordingly; but Hammond being out at the time it arrived, no anſwer was returned that day.

Agatha ſpent a night of unſpeakable anguiſh. The proſpect of ſeeing Hammond, one moment buoyed up her ſinking ſpirits, the next, the recollection that it was for the laſt time, plunged her again into miſery beyond all ſhe had ever felt before. She endeavoured to recollect every thing ſhe wiſhed to ſay to him, and to arrange it in order: but ſomething new every moment occurred, and ſhe fancied that if ſhe were to indulge in ſaying all ſhe wiſhed, their converſation would never have an end. She wiſhed that the interview had been

been delayed for ſome days, at leaſt; not only that ſhe might have had more time for reflection, but that the bleſſing might then have been all that time in expectation, and thus have cut off ſo many days of ſorrow: for O! when it was paſſed, what a blank would be the reſt of her exiſtence! Dreadful to think that one day more, and this laſt, and only bleſſing would be gone—gone for ever!—— The morning arrived, and from this laſt reflection ſhe ſickened at its appearance, and wiſhed the hours prolonged which were to be the only ones that had a ray of hope to chear them.

While ſhe was dreſſing, Hannah came in with a look of much pleaſure, to inform her, that the browniſh gentleman, for ſhe was ſure it was he by John's deſcription when he took him the letter the day before, had ſent a ſervant already to inform her maſter that he would wait upon him at four o'clock. "And "ſo, Miſs," ſhe ſaid, "as Sir Charles ſent "word he ſhould be glad to ſee him, it looks "as if matters went on a little better. I "don't ſo much wiſh it now," purſued Han-

nah, "but I did wiſh moſt mortally that my "Lady might have kicked the bucket that "time ſhe was about it, and then, you know, "Miſs, you might have managed Sir Charles "in the ſtead of her."

"Of whom do you ſpeak in that man-"ner?" ſaid Agatha. "Never let me hear "a diſreſpectful word of either of my pa-"rents: they are very good to me, and ne-"ver wiſh to deny me any thing in their "power to grant."

"Nay, Miſs," returned Hannah, "I don't "ſee there was any thing diſinſpectful in "what I ſaid; and as to a wife's managing "her huſband as they call it, it's what every "woman would do if ſo be ſhe could; and "for the matter of that, men are much bet-"ter to *be* managed, let 'em have an inch "and they take an ell, as the ſaying is, and "when once a body lets 'em have their own "way, they never thinks they have enough of "it, but gets as many whims and vagaries as "dancing bears."

Hannah, imagining ſhe heard her Lady's foot, now went away in haſte, to Agatha's great

great relief, whoſe ſpirits were ill-calculated at that moment to endure her vulgar converſation; and ſhe had more than once repented, that by conſenting to receive and return a letter through her means, ſhe had given her a licenſe to talk to her with a familiarity ſhe would not otherwiſe have thought of aſſuming.

When ſhe went down, Sir Charles informed her that Mr. Hammond had ſent a verbal meſſage to ſay he would be with them at four o'clock. "You will, therefore," he continued, "think of whatever you wiſhed to ſay to "your friend, whom, as the brother of Ma-"ria, I am not ſurprized you ſhould wiſh to "ſee."

Agatha, turning pale, and trembling, replied, that ſhe had endeavoured to think of every thing.

"How long," ſaid Lady Belmont, "ſhall "you wiſh your converſation to continue, for "I do not wiſh to interrupt you?"

"Heaven knows!" replied Agatha. "For "pity's ſake, my dear mother, do not diſ-"treſs me thus." Then pauſing and recollecting

ing

ing herſelf, "perhaps an hour or rather more," ſhe ſaid.

"Enough, enough, my love," ſaid Lady Belmont; "I will not mention it again." After a minute's deliberation ſhe continued, "Perhaps my Agatha repents of her intention; if ſo, it may, and ſhall yet be avoided: To a feeling heart there is ſomething painful in taking leave of the moſt indifferent perſon."

"O!" replied Agatha, "it will be my laſt, my only comfort; think not that I can repent it. My mother's ſolemn word was given——"

"I know it, my dear," replied Lady Belmont, "and was far from meaning to retract. What I ſaid ſprang from regard to you and your feelings: had you had a common mind I ſhould not have feared it for you; but I know the mereſt trifle affects you, and I wiſh to ſpare you unneceſſary pain."

Lady Belmont now changed the converſation, and ſpoke of indifferent ſubjects. Agatha endeavoured to attend to her, but her mind

wandered

wandered—ſhe was abſent and thoughtful—ſhe did not ſhed a tear, but at intervals, though ſhe ſtrove by every effort in her power to ſuppreſs it, ſighed as if her heart would break.

The wiſhed, yet dreaded hour, at length arrived: Before the deſſert was removed, a ſervant announced Mr. Hammond. Sir Charles ordered the ſervant to ſhew him into the library, and to inform him they would attend him immediately.

"Now then, Agatha," ſaid Lady Belmont, "are you ready? Shall I go in with you, or "go and ſpeak to him firſt?"

Agatha trembled violently, and had neither power to move nor ſpeak.

Sir Charles poured out a glaſs of water, and gave to her; then after walking haſtily up and down the room ſeveral times, he ſaid angrily, as he approached her. "It was very "ſilly to expoſe yourſelf to this uneaſineſs." Agatha now wept; and raiſing her hands and eyes to Heaven, "Thank God!" ſhe ſaid, "for theſe tears—I ſhall be better now. "I thought my heart would have broken." Lady Belmont preſſed her to her boſom, and

wept

wept over her. "Now, my dear girl," ſhe ſaid, while tears almoſt choaked her utterance, "ſhall we go?—Or ſhall Sir Charles go to "him firſt?"

"If ſhe is well enough," ſaid Sir Charles, "I think ſhe had better go. Come, my "dear," continued he, taking her hand with ſome tenderneſs, "endeavour to recover your "ſpirits: you have an heroic ſoul in ſpite of "theſe womaniſh feelings."

"She has," ſaid Lady Belmont; "ſhe is "every way an angel; and if ever one hu-"man creature idolized another I do her: I "look up to her as to a being of a ſuperior or-"der. Come, my ſweet girl," ſhe continued, kiſſing off her tears, "no more of this: "ſuch weakneſs might ſit well on an ordi-"nary character, but does not become *my* "Agatha."

Agatha now roſe, and without daring to truſt herſelf to ſpeak, leaned on her mother's arm, and "with fainting ſtep and ſlow," went with her out of the room.—When ſhe had almoſt reached the door of the library, ſhe ſtopped, ſhuddered, and was unable to proceed.

"Come,

"Come, my love," ſaid Lady Belmont, "reſume your courage: remember who you "are."

"O Madam!" ſaid Agatha "pray, pray "for me, and pity me."

"My Agatha," ſaid Lady Belmont ſobbing, "for you before myſelf, before my "huſband, I am bound to pray. I more "than love or pity, I adore you! Be com-"forted then my ſweet child."

Agatha now made an effort to reſume her courage, and opened herſelf the door.

Hammond, who had been walking up and down the room, on hearing the door opened, turned round with a countenance of agony and terror, yet mingled with a look of momentary joy at ſight of Agatha. He flew to meet her, and taking her hand,—preſſed it to his lips. "My Agatha," he ſaid, "and do "I — do I ſee you!——"

"Mr. Hammond!" ſaid Agatha, her voice faint and faltering, "Heaven pre-"ſerve you!"

Hammond, unable to bear the ſound of that voice, on the accents of which he had delighted

delighted hung in happier days, now tremulous and every tone expreſſive of ſorrow, ſunk upon a ſopha, and putting his hands before his face, hid the tears which flowed down his manly cheeks.

Agatha, in his ſufferings once again forgetting her own, went towards him, and taking hold of his arm, "Mr. Hammond—my dear "—my beſt friend—" ſhe ſaid, "recover "yourſelf.—Think where you are—whom "you are come to ſee. Be comforted for "pity's ſake, for my ſake."

Hammond let fall his hands, and gazing wiſtfully on her face.—"O Agatha! is it "come to this? do we meet to part for "ever?——"

"No Hammond—not for ever!"

"Say that again, thou angel! and I will "worſhip thee!——"

"No, we ſhall meet again in a world "where no duty forbids me to love thee; "where we ſhall never part more, and enjoy "an Eternity of bliſs together!——"

"O Agatha! What, never to meet till "that ſweet frame has ſunk into duſt,—till

" thoſe eyes are cloſed for ever,—and that
" voice—O Agatha!"

" It is but a few ſhort years, my Ham-
" mond!—It is but enduring a little ſor-
" row——"

" A little ſorrow!——"

" No, I meant not ſo—it will indeed be
" dreadful; but then its continuance will be
" ſhort: Every day draws us nearer to our
" end—every clock that ſtrikes ſhall tell us
" we are one hour nearer to felicity."

Lady Belmont, unable to bear this, went out of the room, in an agony not to be deſcribed.

" But now, my dear friend, my kind
" Hammond," ſaid Agatha, " let us aſſume
" a little compoſure, nor waſte this precious
" hour in unavailing tears. I have much to
" ſay to you, had more, but my memory fails
" me."

" I will my love, my angel! I will be
" compoſed: ſpeak, and on thoſe ſweet ac-
" cents let me hang for ever."

" A neceſſity as fatal as it is unavoidable
" obliges my parents to take me to France;
" there to live perhaps for ever."

" But

" But what is country, my Agatha! O! " let them fly to the moſt deſolate ſpot on " earth, and I will follow thee, and live upon " thy ſmiles."

" No, my Hammond, that muſt not be. " They forbid me to think of you."

" And canſt thou forget me, Agatha?"

" Never while life remains will Agatha " forget thee; but I muſt remember thee " but as a friend—as that, dearer than life, " and all that it could give, you will ever " be."

" O Agatha! And ſhall another?——I " cannot ſpeak it——"

" Never Hammond. No other ſhall ever " call me by a dearer name: of this reſt aſ- " ſured. I never did, never will love any one " but you; nor will it be demanded; but a " neceſſity dreadful and inviolable compels " me to renounce thee in every other but the " dear light of friend:—as that, no duty can " forbid me to think of you; and that is ſurely " a bleſſing! Remember thoſe happy days " when you were only friend to me—re- " member how dear was that title to you " then."

" O! days

"O! days of bliſs! never, never to re-
"turn!" ſaid Hammond, relapſing into his former agony.

"Once more, my Hammond," ſaid Agatha, "let me conjure you not to loſe theſe "precious minutes. I have a favour to aſk "at your hands; promiſe, promiſe to grant "it."

"O! bid me do any thing but leave "thee!"

"I would, indeed, that were never to be! "but ſince it is the will of Heaven we muſt "ſubmit, my Hammond; and that Heaven, "which ſees and enjoins will reward our obe-"dience. What I implore of you, is, for "my ſake to be happy: Shut out myſelf from "happineſs I could yet enjoy it in you. "Think, Hammond, and remember that "every hour of comfort you experience will "be reflected on me. When we are far apart, "and the friends who adore you, the ſociety "you adorn, ſhall ſtrive to enliven you, re-"ſiſt not their influence, ſhut not your heart "to their endeavours: ſay rather, my Agatha "claims it, and I will be happy. Something

"whiſpers

" whiſpers me that you can never know a joy
" but my heart will ſhare it with you, will
" vibrate with ſympathetic pleaſure: Think
" of this."

" Thou angel!" ſaid Hammond; " but
" now hear me. You ſay, my Agatha ſays
" that I ſhall ſtill call her friend; ſhall I not
" then, dare I not hope to ſee you? were it
" but once in a year, I would live upon thoſe
" dear moments, and all the reſt ſhould ſeem
" as nothing."

" No Hammond, we muſt not, muſt not
" meet: dreadful to think!" Then turning from him in ſpeechleſs agony, ſhe ſeemed for ſome moments loſt to recollection.

" Once again hear me, my angel," ſaid Hammond. " Is it not, O! is it not bar-
" barous in your parents to condemn us to
" this miſery! Why O! why ſhould it be
" given to one human being to rule another
" with a rod of iron! No juſt reaſon can bid
" them tear our hearts aſunder. My fortune,
" my birth, though below theirs, are not
" contemptible; and I have ſo ſtudied to live
" that I know not an enemy. What then

" ſhould divide us! Can any duty compel
" us to ſubmit to the decrees of caprice and
" tyranny?"

" I will not deceive you. Nothing but a
" vow made to her own parent at the point
" of death, could have induced my mother
" to deny me that happineſs ſhe would glory
" to beſtow. But that vow which forbad her
" child to marry, invoked at the ſame time,
" the moſt dreadful curſes on herſelf in caſe
" of its violation."

" Merciful God! And ſhall my Agatha
" be its victim?—And what—for mercy's
" ſake, unfold all—what could induce a mo-
" ther to exact ſuch a vow?"

" A crime of which ſhe had herſelf been
" guilty, and for which ſhe conceived this an
" atonement. More I dare not reveal, and I
" conjure you not to aſk it."

" And can a vow like this be binding? ex-
" torted perhaps in a moment of delirium,
" and made, when the mind, diſtracted by
" grief, is not miſtreſs of itſelf——its rea-
" ſon?——"

" Heaven only knows how far a vow thus

" made

" made *is* binding! but the curſes my unhap-
" py mother imprecated on herſelf, I dare
" not draw down upon her head: no Ham-
" mond! though one dearer than life be for-
" feited by my obedience."

" But O! then my Agatha, though all
" other hopes be denied us, we may yet meet,
" yet live as friends, forbid to call each other
" by a tenderer name—this ſtill ſhall bleſs us;
" from friendſhip ſprang our love, and to
" that ſweet—that ſacred ſource it ſhall re-
" turn."

" It ſhall, my Hammond: but to meet
" is—O! it is impoſſible!"

" Impoſſible! Gracious Heaven! what
" vow forbids?"

" O Hammond! ſeek to know no fur-
" ther—I dare not—cannot ſay—but we muſt
" not meet."

" Diſtraction! miſery! O Agatha! that I
" had never lived to ſee this day! that the
" death which menaced my early years had
" not been withheld! that in the grave,
" where only I can hope for peace, I were
" now laid for ever!"

" My Hammond, ſpeak not thus. Let
" us, O! let us arm ourſelves with forti-
" tude. God Almighty ſees our diſtreſs, his
" ears are open to our prayers, and he will
" not permit us to ſuffer beyond that we are
" able to bear. The veriеſt wretch that
" crawls upon the earth, knows not a miſery
" beyond what I have endured for ſome
" dreadful weeks—yet while torn by a thou-
" ſand conflicting ſufferings, I have found
" conſolation in Religion. For you I will
" never ceaſe to pray—no, Hammond! the
" laſt word theſe lips ſhall utter ſhall be your
" name."

Sir Charles now came in, and, addreſſing Hammond with cold politeneſs, began to ſpeak of ordinary ſubjects; but Hammond was unable to reply to him beyond a mere aſſent to whatever he ſaid. After ſome minutes thus paſſed, Sir Charles turned to Agatha, and ſaid, " your mother wants you Aga-
" tha." She turned pale as death, and as ſhe offered to riſe, ſunk again into her chair. Hammond took her hand, but could not ſpeak.

" I am

"I am ſorry it ſo happens, Sir," ſaid Sir Charles, "but unexpected buſineſs will engage me for the reſt of the evening; had "not that been the caſe, I ſhould have been "happy to have had the pleaſure of your "company longer. Agatha, my dear, I do "not know if you heard me?"

Agatha now roſe, and turning to Hammond, ſunk into his arms. "God bleſs you," ſhe at laſt ſaid, "God ever bleſs you—preſerve you——comfort you!"——Hammond kiſſed her in ſpeechleſs anguiſh. Faint and trembling, ſhe again offered to go, but Hammond again took her hand, and again ſhe turned back and looked at him with unutterable anguiſh. Bleſſings, bleſſings light on thee! he now ſtrove to ſay, but his voice failed, and his words were ſcarcely audible.

Sir Charles now took the hand Hammond held, and leading Agatha out of the room, conveyed her almoſt lifeleſs to her mother, leaving Hammond in an agony little ſhort of diſtraction.

CHAP. II.

LADY Belmont, who after the moving ſcene ſhe had witneſſed, had retired to her room, regardleſs of Sir Charles's efforts to conſole her, now roſe from the chair into which ſhe had thrown herſelf, and as Agatha approached, held open her arms to receive her; Agatha ſunk into them, and ſobbed on her boſom. When the firſt tumult of grief had ſubſided, Lady Belmont ſtrove by every expreſſion pity, and maternal tenderneſs could ſuggeſt, to ſooth the diſtreſſes ſhe would have died to alleviate. "O! my Agatha!" ſhe at laſt exclaimed, "Would to Heaven this tongue "had forgotten its office, ere it was bid to pro-"nounce that fatal decree! How barbarous, "to condemn my innocent child to ſufferings "which all my tenderneſs can never mitigate! "I now feel I ought to have died rather than "have uttered thoſe cruel words."

"Do not thus accuſe yourſelf, my deareſt "mother," ſaid Agatha, endeavouring to recover herſelf and to ſpeak peace to the wounded

wounded boſom of her ſelf-condemning parent, "Thoſe only who have been in that "dreadful ſituation, who have heard a pa-"rent's dying requeſt, can know how hard "it were to reſiſt it. Who could have acted "otherwiſe?—And O! be not diſtreſſed for "me—the worſt is over now."

"O Agatha! how ſhould I have gloried "in granting every wiſh of your heart! how "delighted to unite you to one you ſeem born "to love!—But from this moment I will "no more ſeek to influence or controul you. "In your reaſon, your better judgement I "confide: if you ſhould yet think my "vow can be diſpenſed with, I am ready, I "am willing to ſubmit to your deciſion, "whatever be the conſequence."

"O! tempt me not," replied Agatha, "to "abandon that duty I have bound myſelf to "fulfil. No," continued ſhe, firmly, "that "determination which every ſuggeſtion of "reaſon, every hour of deliberate reflection, "ſerved only to confirm, ſufferings, greater "if poſſible than theſe, ſhall never ſub-"due."

"Nobleſt of all human beings!" ſaid Lady Belmont, "how, every moment, do you "riſe in my eſtimation! Come to my arms, "angelic girl! and if the conſtant and un-"wearied endeavours of my whole life can "leſſen the pains and encreaſe the comforts "of yours, doubt not that you ſhall receive "them. I will have no thought, no wiſh "but your happineſs, and art and nature "ſhall be ranſacked to give you but a mo-"ment's pleaſure."

"Nearly two hours were paſſed in this "manner; Lady Belmont one minute endea-"vouring to comfort Agatha, and ſoothe her "ſorrows, the next, expreſſing the venera-"tion her conduct inſpired. At laſt, faint and dejected, they left the room, and were proceeding to the library, where they uſually drank tea; but Agatha ſtopped at the door, and by a look which expreſſed more than words, told her mother that ſhe had not cou-rage to enter: Lady Belmont but too well comprehended its meaning, and turning to the dining room, ſaid, "On recollection it "will be cooler here, and we will order tea

"in

" in this room."—Sir Charles had left word that he was gone out on buſineſs, and they did not ſee him till very late in the evening; when he returned, his ſpirits appeared little leſs depreſſed than thoſe of Lady Belmont and Agatha, and unable to ſupport a converſation, they retired ſoon after to reſt.

Agatha had paſſed ſeveral nights without ſleep; but nature, long haraſſed, was at length exhauſted, and, though more unhappy than ſhe had ever yet been, ſhe ſunk into a ſweet and refreſhing ſlumber, from which ſhe did not awake till late in the morning. She bleſſed Heaven for this temporary ceſſation of ſuffering; and though ſhe awoke with a confuſed ſenſation of regret and uneaſineſs, ſhe felt, by degrees, more calm and reſigned than ſhe had yet done.

After ſome days, her grief ſettled into a kind of patient melancholy. When Lady Belmont, forgetting her own diſtreſs, ſtrove to conſole or enliven her, ſhe received her tender attentions with the moſt endearing gratitude; and would even ſometimes force herſelf to ſmile—but it was the ſmile of de-

jection, and faint and chearleſs as the momentary glimmerings of the juſt-expiring taper. —Lady Belmont, by degrees, ventured to introduce the ſubject of their departure from England, and ſpoke of the country they were in future to inhabit. Agatha liſtened to her without emotion or apparent uneaſineſs: ſhe was reſigned to her fate, and looked forward to its completion with melancholy compoſure. A long continuance of ſorrow blunts, for a time, at leaſt, the edge of our ſenſibility. —"We have ſearched," Lady Belmont one day ſaid to Agatha, "almoſt every province "in France, to diſcover a ſituation the ro- "mantic beauties of which might diminiſh "the pain of a continued reſidence in it, and "in queſt of a ſociety as free as poſſible from "every monaſtic auſterity. The lady under "whoſe care you will be placed is of noble "birth, and refined manners: the world "contains few more deſerving the friendſhip "and confidence of my Agatha. You will "not be wholly ſeparated from us: we have "purchaſed an eſtate leſs than a mile diſtant "from my Agatha's reſidence; and not a

"day

" day ſhall paſs in which we will not enjoy " ſome hours of her ſociety.—" Agatha enquired the name of the place and the province. " It is," replied Lady Belmont, " about two miles from Iſſoire in the Pro- " vince of Auvergne ; a country and climate " infinitely ſurpaſſing what your ideas can " form, from having lived only here. Na- " ture produces ſpontaneouſly the moſt deli- " cious grapes, and other fruits in equal per- " fection ; and did the induſtry of the inha- " bitants keep pace with the fertility of their " ſoil, there is not a comfort or luxury which " they might not enjoy. But nature ſeems " to have ordained, that in every country the " induſtry of the people ſhall be in exact " proportion to the neceſſity they are under " to exert it ; and when the earth gives her " treaſures without culture, man is too indo- " lent to court an encreaſe of her favours."

The time for their departure was at length fixed ; and now it was, that Agatha's ſenſibility returned, and with it brought a ſad renewal of all her former anguiſh. She gazed with avidity on every ſpot of ground, on the

very walls around her, ſoon to be quitted for ever,—and quitted for what?—A perpetual priſon!—Lady Belmont would not ſuffer her to take any part in the preparations for their departure, but gave herſelf every direction to the ſervants: Mrs. Wildys and three other maids, with two men ſervants being all who were to accompany them; the reſt of their houſehold was to be hired in France. Hannah was not in the number of thoſe who were to go with them; ſhe told her Lady that ſhe could not think of leaving her naked country for nobody; and ſhe could not help hinting as ſhe was no longer afraid of giving offence, and was deſirous of ſhewing her own ſagacity and diſcernment, that ſhe was afraid they might chuſe to make a nun of *her*.

The dreaded day now arrived. It was on the 25th of September 1788. Agatha, to whom the agony of her mind acted like the falſe and temporary ſtrength occaſioned by fever, left not a room, a walk, a ſpot of ground untraverſed. She took a little earth from the garden, kiſſed it, and put it into a little box. This, ſhe ſaid, ſhall be my darling

treaſure, a conſolation when all others are denied me. Perhaps on this very duſt Maria's feet have trod. Perhaps in thoſe happy days when I leaned on her arm, and learned the leſſons of virtue from her lips, while my heart expanded with hope and youthful pleaſure, perhaps on this dear earth ſhe ſtood. Perhaps——poor! poor Hammond!——perhaps, with bleeding heart he wandered over it. Come then to my boſom dear remnant of my native ſoil and country: ſpeak for its yet dear inhabitants, and be my companion and comforter in their ſtead.—She then went to her own little library, and kiſſed the walls—the table. Here it was, ſhe ſaid, in infant years my little toys were laid. Here it was my mother would ſit and take me on her knee, and reward at night the dear labours of the morning. Here too Maria's voice yet ſeems to vibrate in my ear: O! ſounds of pleaſure, of delight, never, never to be heard again? Here ſhe would ſit—here, in this very ſpot—here did we read—here work together. O! had ſhe lived to ſee this day, her heart would have broken. Bleſſed be the mercy of Heaven that took her hence and ſpared her

gentle

gentle breaſt the conflict!—She now viſited the library below. Here, here it was, ſhe ſaid, my Hammond ſat: *my* Hammond! No, never to be mine. On this ſopha he ſat. And how he looked at me! how kind! as if he only thought of me, only wept for my ſorrows! And ſo he did. O! he has a heart that would not leave a ſorrow in the world if he could rule! Heaven bleſs—bleſs him for it!—And here—O! dreadful ſpot! I ſaw him for the laſt, laſt time. O! that look! never ſhall I forget it—I feel it now! Then ſcreaming, ſhe ran into Lady Belmont's arms, who came in ſearch of her, almoſt deprived of ſenſe and life.

In this ſtate ſhe was rather carried than led to the carriage which waited for them at the door, and after ſhe was put in it fainted away. The moment ſhe began to revive, not daring to ſtay for fear of a relapſe on beholding once more objects ſo dear to her, they ordered the chaiſe to drive on, and before ſhe was perfectly ſenſible, or able to look around her, they were many miles from their abode.

She had no ſooner recovered her recollection,

tion, than, unconſcious how far they had gone, ſhe leaned out of the window, in hopes of catching one other view of ſome object ſhe had been accuſtomed to ſee. There was one clump of trees, which, being in an elevated ſituation, were viſible for more than two miles round: She looked for them; but unable to diſcover them, and the road in which they now were, being new to her, ſhe was ſoon but too certain how far ſhe was removed from a ſpot which was infinitely dearer to her than till this day ſhe had ever imagined, and where all her hopes and affections ſeemed now centred.—The face of nature was little in uniſon with her feelings. Every thing ſmiled around. The ſun ſhining with unuſual ſplendour, gilded the yellow leaves with which autumn had intermixed the foliage of every tree. They paſſed a chearful group, who, reſting from their labour, were refreſhing themſelves in the ſhade with their frugal repaſt. Ruddy health glowed on their cheeks, contentment ſat on their brows, and the coarſe and hearty laugh was heard as they paſſed them. Happy, happy peaſants! thought Agatha, and

and free as happy! My heart is not yet ſo hardened by its own ſorrows as to take no ſhare in your joys: long may they be preſerved to you! O did ye know the diſtreſſes of thoſe ſtations which at ſome moments ye may be blind enough to envy, how would ye exult in your own!—

The variety of objects inſenſibly diſſipated from Agatha's mind, in ſome degree, the remembrance of her ſituation. She now began to look around her, and, peace being baniſhed her own breaſt, to ſeek it in the countenances of others, or loſe in the contemplation of the beauties of nature the ſad recollection of the griefs ſhe had known, and thoſe which yet awaited her.

Their journey preſented nothing remarkable; and they arrived at Dover in three days without any circumſtance having occurred worth noting.

The moment of Agatha's quitting Dover, of leaving her country for ever, was another of thoſe marked with peculiar miſery.—There is ſomething in the name of our own, our native country, endearing to every heart, and conveying

conveying a thouſand fond remembrances to the mind: or why is baniſhment ſo dreadful? when other lands are open to receive us; others, perhaps, which preſent to the eye numberleſs ſuperior beauties, and afford the comforts and luxuries of life in greater abundance; but no other bleſſing can atone for a ſeparation from that ſoil on which our infant feet have trod, that air where firſt we drew our breath.

Their paſſage from Dover was, like their journey to it, unmarked by any peculiar event; and they arrived ſafely at Calais, where the novelty of the ſcene again baniſhed, in ſome meaſure, the remembrance of Agatha's ſorrows. They remained one day at Calais, and from thence proceeded ſouthward by eaſy ſtages, paſſing ſome hours in every place through which they paſſed which preſented any thing curious to the traveller; and arrived at Iſſoire during the ſecond week in October.

The eſtate Sir Charles had purchaſed had every advantage of ſituation to recommend it; and Agatha turning to Lady Belmont, ſaid

as

as they were admiring the various beauties around them, "O! had this been my deſtin-
"ed abode, how—how happy were I yet!
"Yes, though divided from my country and
"friends, ſtill to be under one roof with my
"parents, bound by no dreadful vow——"

"Would to Heaven it were ſo, my ſweet
"girl," ſaid Lady Belmont: "yet in idea
"only is that vow dreadful; and truſt me
"the beauties of this ſcene fall infinitely
"ſhort of thoſe of the charming ſpot which
"is deſtined for your reſidence: art and na-
"ture have combined to render it delight-
"ful."

Agatha ſighed deeply; and Lady Belmont preſſed her to her boſom with unutterable tenderneſs.

Several days paſſed, and Lady Belmont made no propoſal of viſiting the convent. Agatha trembled whenever ſhe ſpoke, leſt the dreadful ſubject ſhould be mentioned; and bleſſed even theſe joyleſs days, and ſighed as every hour of them paſſed, ſince theſe were yet days of freedom, though marked with ſorrow and fear.

Lady

Lady Belmont, accompanied by Agatha, walked every day to different parts of the country; frequently to the diſtance of ſeveral miles— In one of theſe rambles Lady Belmont complained of feeling fatigued, and propoſed to Agatha to return by a nearer road; they accordingly turned from the path, and proceeded ſtraight through a ſmall wood. Juſt as they had reached the end of it, Lady Belmont ſat down, and confeſſed ſhe was unable to proceed farther. Agatha alarmed and uneaſy enquired if ſhe knew of any habitation near them. "I do not," replied Lady Belmont, "unleſs the large gate I obſerve through thoſe trees ſhould lead to one." Agatha looked, and diſcovering a very high wall to which there was a large iron gate, ſaid ſhe imagined they were near the garden of ſome nobleman. "It may be the Marquis de Blevarde's," ſaid Lady Belmont; "he has an eſtate near Iſſoire; "and ſince hoſpitality is no where "more practiſed than among the French "nobles, I will venture to try if one of the "keys belonging to our own gate, which I "recollect having with me, will open this."

She

She now attempted it, and the key unlocked it without the leaſt difficulty. They had no ſooner opened that gate, than another of the ſame ſize and materials preſented itſelf. Lady Belmont again ſearched her pocket, and found a key ſomewhat ſmaller which unlocked that with equal eaſe.

"Good God!" ſaid Agatha, ſhuddering as they opened the ſecond gate, "if it ſhould "be———"

"Should be what? my love," ſaid Lady Belmont.

"O! I cannot ſpeak it. Pity me—hold "me—let them not tear me from you!———"

"Why this alarm, my love? If this ſhould "belong to the Marquis, what injury can "you poſſibly ſuppoſe———"

"O! but if it does not; if it is that "dreadful place.———Yet you have ſeen it, "and muſt know."

Lady Belmont turned from Agatha to conceal her emotion; and now, taking the precaution of locking the gates again, ſhe took her hand and led her along a winding walk through a beautiful grove the trees of which grew

grew in ſome parts thick and were impervious to the ſun, and in others, planted thinner, admitted its ſetting beams through their foliage, ſprinkling, as it were, with light the path before them. Among the trees a ſmall clear ſtream meandered over pebbles, which here and there was brought to wind acroſs the path, and one ruſtic arch led them over it. As they proceeded further, the trees became gradually thicker, till, by a tranſition as momentary as it was delightful, they opened on a beautiful ſemicircular lawn. Seats formed of green turf, and canopied with flowers and fruits, were ranged within the creſcent. Turning round, they ſaw, oppoſite to the ſeats, a long viſta terminated by a ſuperb temple. Attracted by its beauty they proceeded along the viſta, and now diſcovered that the temple ſtood on an iſland, ſurrounded by a ſmall lake; a boat with ſails painted in lively colours floated on the water, and added to the gaiety of the ſcene. Obſerving a riſing ground on one ſide of them, Lady Belmont propoſed to aſcend it, as they might have a view of the houſe from thence, and by that

means

means diſcover which road they ought to purſue to lead them to it. They accordingly aſcended it, and Agatha remarked with ſurprize that Lady Belmont had entirely forgotten the wearineſs of which ſhe had complained. From the top of the eminence they looked around them, and ſaw, on one ſide Mount Dor, its lofty ſummit appearing buried in the clouds, and on another the town and lake of Iſſoire, as the evening ſun gilded the ſummits of the houſes. "O!" ſaid Agatha, "all "ideas I could have formed of romantic "ſcenery fall ſhort of this, and did not ſome-"thing ſtrike like death itſelf to my heart, I "could never be weary of contemplating it." Lady Belmont made no reply, but preſſing her to her boſom, called her her beloved daughter. They now deſcended the way they came, and having yet ſeen no appearance of an habitation, Lady Belmont propoſed to return back through the viſta to the grove, and thence to the gates by which they entered; but the moment they had reached the grove, and were entering the impenetrable gloom of that part which opened on the lawn, they

heard the ſound of a bell at a little diſtance. Agatha ſtarted and turned pale.

"Why this alarm, my love?" ſaid Lady Belmont.

"It is—it is too true, and that bell rings "to Veſpers." Then holding Lady Belmont, ſhe looked around her in wildneſs and terror.

"My dear girl," ſaid Lady Belmont, "you "equally ſhock and terrify me; be more "compoſed or what will become of me."

"O! tell me the truth, and I will ſtrive "to bear it! but deceive me not thus, nor "keep me in a ſuſpenſe more dreadful, if "poſſible, than the reality. Is this indeed "the convent?"

"Hear me, my darling Agatha! be com-"poſed, I conjure you, and hear me. I "wiſhed to ſpare my ſweet girl the pain of a "formal introduction to a place, which, ſeen "with other ideas, could not fail to charm; "I wiſhed to lead you to admire the loveliеſt "ſcene in nature before I told you to whom "it belonged: your fears anticipated the diſ-"covery, and eluded my intentions."

"Juſt

"Juſt Heaven," ſaid Agatha, falling on her knees, "thy will be done. O! look "down upon me, and ſupport me in theſe "awful moments!"

Then riſing and looking around her, "this "then," ſhe ſaid, "is the boundary of my "exiſtence: tenant of this ſcene till death. "Yes, theſe trees, which now, for the firſt "time, I have beheld, day after day, year "after year, in unvaried ſucceſſion I ſhall "contemplate; loſt to that world I ſhall have "ſworn to renounce."

"My beloved Agatha," ſaid Lady Belmont, "would to Heaven it were my lot "to forſake it for you——with what tranſ-"port——"

"Heaven forbid!" replied Agatha, "No, "I would not purchaſe a moment's pleaſure "or exemption from pain at the expence of "any one, how then at that of my mother; "ſo kind a parent, ſo dear a friend!——At "this moment, my ſpirits and ſtrength ſeem "renewed; now, while they laſt, lead me "forward to ——————"

"To the houſe, my love?"

"If

"If you pleaſe," ſaid Agatha, trembling violently, yet ſtudying for compoſure.

"This way then, my Agatha; it is on the "other ſide of the grove."

Agatha leaned on Lady Belmont, unable to walk without ſupport. Now, for a moment ſhe ſtopped, wanting courage to proceed; and now again walked with haſty ſteps, the ſooner to terminate the trial.—Paſſing by the iron gate, they proceeded a ſmall diſtance farther on the other ſide of it, where the grove terminated in a lawn, in which the convent, and, adjoining it, the chapel ſtood. The building, which was ſpacious and lofty, was of Gothic ſtructure. The ſtone in many parts was overgrown with moſs, and in all the hand of time had left its traces. The female choir were performing Veſpers as they approached; and as the harmony of their voices joined to the pealing notes of the organ ſtruck their ear the moment they were paſſed the grove, it ſeemed as if Heaven itſelf were opening on them. Agatha ſtopped; and in the mingled tranſport and devotion it inſpired, forgot, for a moment, both her terror and diſtreſs, and

raiſed her eyes and hands to Heaven in ſpeechleſs extacy.

"Shall we proceed my love," ſaid Lady Belmont, "or ſhall we remain longer to "enjoy theſe ſeraphic ſounds?"

"We will go on if you pleaſe," ſaid Agatha faintly.

They now approached the building: A Gothic door, under a portico overgrown with ivy, was the entrance. Lady Belmont now recollected that they could not enter till the ſervice was concluded. This delay proved fatal to Agatha. The courage ſhe had aſſumed, and which was renewed by the rapturous harmony ſhe had heard, forſook her by degrees, till at laſt as ſhe heard footſteps within, and ſome one unbar the door, ſhe fainted.

When ſhe revived, ſhe found herſelf in Lady Belmont's arms, in a ſmall room, furniſhed like an Engliſh parlour, and a lady, in a long white veil, tall, elegant, and of a figure at once majeſtic and intereſting, uſing different applications to recover her, and in the tendereſt manner ſtudying to conſole Lady

Belmont. As Agatha revived, ſhe addreſſed her in a tone of equal affection and reſpect, and with the ſoothing tenderneſs of a mother, enquired if ſhe was better: then turning to a beautiful young woman in the habit of a nun, "Siſter Agnes," ſhe ſaid, "if, now this "ſweet lady is rather better and able to ſwal-"low them, we were to give her ſome drops "of our diſtilled herbs, I think it would re-"vive her." The beautiful nun brought them inſtantly, and Agatha felt almoſt immediate relief from the medicine.

Lady Belmont now ſaid, "I muſt intro-"duce my Agatha to this excellent lady as "to a ſecond mother; it is, my Agatha, Ma-"dame the Marchioneſs de St. Clermont, "who as abbeſs of this ſiſterhood has retired "voluntarily to devote herſelf to Heaven."

"Happy, indeed, ſhall I think myſelf," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "if this Lady ſhould "ever regard me as a mother; it ſhall be my "conſtant ſtudy to deſerve her friendſhip."

"Suffer me to introduce to you," continued Madame St. Clermont "our beloved Siſter "Agnes: She was a daughter of the late

" Count de Vermueil, and is a valuable mem-
" ber of our little community."

Agatha, whom the countenance of the lovely Siſter Agnes had intereſted the moment ſhe ſaw her, held out her hand to her on this introduction, and amidſt the depreſſion which yet ſunk her heart, felt ſecretly grateful that among the few with whom ſhe was hereafter to aſſociate, there were two whoſe appearance ſpoke ſo warmly in their favour.

But Agatha with a heart exquiſitely tender, was bleſt with that ſweet diſpoſition of mind which ſeeks rather to draw good from evil, than evil from good: if in the thorny paths of adverſity one comfort raiſed its kindly head, ſhe ſaw and cheriſhed it, nor diſregarded its ſweets on account of the baleful weeds by which it was ſurrounded; and if every roſe had its thorn, and every joy its allay of ſorrow, in the fragrance of the flower ſhe endeavoured to forget its prickles, in gratitude for the bleſſing, to loſe ſight of its attendant uneaſineſs.

Lady Belmont mentioned the temple, the beauty of which had ſtruck them greatly.

" That

"That temple," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "is a ſource of much innocent plea-
"ſure to us; and, in order to render its in-
"fluence the greater, it is never viſited but
"on particular occaſions; on feſtivals inſtitu-
"ted in honour of the virtuous actions of the
"father, mother, brother, or ſiſter of one of
"our ſociety, or on account of any benevo-
"lent or charitable deed which in our con-
"fined ſphere we have been ſo fortunate as
"to perform. A few days before that deſtin-
"ed for viſiting the temple, ſuch of the com-
"munity as chuſe it, write a few lines of poe-
"try on moral or religious, and ſometimes on
"ſprightly ſubjects, which are given to me to
"depoſit in a vaſe in the temple, according
"to a cuſtom which an Engliſh traveller
"who viſited our convent informed me was
"practiſed in a villa near Bath in England.
"On the day appointed we all proceed to
"the temple where there are fruits and ſweet-
"meats ſet ready, and after refreſhment the
"vaſe is opened and the verſes read, and a
"trifling prize, ſuch as a work box or any
"other becoming our ſituation, is beſtowed
"on the ſucceſsful candidate."

Lady Belmont now ſpeaking of the ſemi-circular lawn, and dwelling on the beauties of the ſeats around it, "That lawn," replied the Lady Abbeſs, "is our theatre; and oppo-"ſite to thoſe ſeats ſome of the ſiſters perform "ſuch little theatrical pieces as I find unex-"ceptionable.--The ſeats you admire are them-"ſelves the reward of induſtry. The flower "garden you probably did not ſee, ſince that "is ſeparated from the reſt. Every one has a "ſmall part of it allotted to her care, and on "a ſtated day the flowers are produced, and "the ſiſter who can diſplay the moſt beau-"tiful collection receives one of thoſe ſeats "as a reward; the one who has poſſeſſed hers "the longeſt reſigning it to her: and in thoſe "they work, read, play on the guitar, or drink "tea occaſionally."

"Thus even in ſolitude," ſaid Lady Bel-mont, "you enjoy ſome of the vaunted plea-"ſures of the world; and for the few which "are denied you, you are amply repaid by an "exemption from thecares and uneaſineſs at-"tendant on them. Honours, riches, and "beauty, the moſt valued of worldly advan-

"tages,

" tages, beſides their precarious duration,
" ſubject us to envy, and ſharpen the arrows
" of detraction."

" We come not hither," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " in queſt of earthly but of Hea-
" venly joys. To do the will of God is our
" ſupreme delight. But as his mercy forbids
" not ſome ſweeteners of this exiſtence, ſome
" ceſſation of that worſhip which would ex-
" pire or grow languid if it knew no inter-
" miſſion, we ſtudy to purſue thoſe recre-
" ations which we deem the moſt innocent;
" nor do we ſeek even theſe purely for their
" own ſakes, but chiefly to enable us to re-
" turn with redoubled ardour and ſatisfaction
" to that devotion which is not more our duty
" than delight."

Agatha grew inſenſibly more tranquil; ſhe found the converſation of Madame St. Clermont every moment more intereſting, as every moment diſplayed ſome new proof of the goodneſs of her heart, and of her warm yet unaffected piety. After they had continued in converſation for nearly two hours, a ſiſter informed Lady Belmont that her carriage waited.

"Sir Charles," ſaid Lady Belmont turning to Agatha, "knew whither I purpoſed to "come, and ſent it at my requeſt." Agatha, pale and trembling, uncertain whether it was intended that ſhe ſhould remain at the convent, or return for the preſent, looked at Lady Belmont with a countenance of ſupplication and fear.

"Why that look, my love?" ſaid Lady Belmont. "Surely you did not imagine that "as I brought you hither by ſurprize I meant "to leave you in the ſame manner. No, you "ſhall fix your own time, make every prepa-"ration you wiſh, and not depart from my "houſe for months, unleſs you deſire it."

"Nor could I conſent," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "to receive Miſs Belmont thus; "and now nor ever muſt ſhe join our ſociety "unleſs ſhe feels the ſame pleaſure on enter-"ing it that we ſhould have in receiving her. "The life I have myſelf choſen I am far from "recommending to others, unleſs they feel "the ſame predilection for it which I have "done. When next I enjoy ſome hours of "your ſociety we will ſpeak of the penances

"enjoined,

"enjoined, as we have now done of the in-
"dulgences allowed us: for I never conſent
"to receive any one till they have a previous
"knowledge of every rigid rule neceſſarily
"attendant on our ſtate."

CHAP. III.

IN order to familiarize Agatha to the ſcene and ſociety of the convent, Lady Belmont attended her thither almoſt every day, and ſpent ſome hours in converſation with Madame St. Clermont, who deſcribed to Agatha, as ſhe had promiſed, the auſterities they obliged themſelves to practice; their cells, where no indulgence or luxury could be allowed them, their faſts, and the ſervice of Matins, which compelled them to riſe at midnight to attend the ſervice in the choir, and which nothing but ſevere illneſs could diſpenſe with. Agatha heard her with little emotion: the diſtreſs of quitting her friends, her lover, her parents, her home, her country, abſorbed every other idea, and would have rendered

her callous to penances far more ſevere than any of thoſe Madame St. Clermont deſcribed. Alas! ſhe thought, what are theſe hardſhips to a heart that bleeds with keener anguiſh! Could a bed of down afford me eaſe? Alas! no—I wake to miſery, and dream but of horrors in all the luxury of my own chamber—can my cold cell add to the terrors of my ſleeping or my waking thoughts! And when I riſe at midnight to offer prayers to him who only can give me peace, ſhall I not return to my bed tranquil and revived! —Yes! a mind at peace perhaps might ſhudder to contemplate the auſterities here practiced: to me they are as nothing.

Agatha was introduced to all the nuns in turns; but except the lovely ſiſter Agnes, whom ſhe had firſt ſeen, and ſiſter Frances, a young nun, whoſe vivacity amuſed her when ſhe had ſpirits to bear it, there was no one whoſe ſociety appeared to merit a diſtinction from the reſt.

Lady Belmont always accompanied Agatha to the convent, nor ever left her while there. One day, however, Madame St. Clermont

ſeized

ſeized an opportunity of ſpeaking to Agatha alone, as a meſſage from Sir Charles called Lady Belmont out of the parlour. "I have "watched for this opportunity, my ſweet "lady," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "ever "ſince the firſt moment I ſaw you, when your "diſtreſs and terror convinced me you did "not make a voluntary choice of the life "for which you are intended. Confeſs the "truth: do you not feel a repugnance to the "veil, or a deſire to continue in the world? "Do you not leave behind you ſome one "whoſe image when your ſoul ſhould mount "to Heaven, will call it back to earth?— "Speak, my charming friend; fear not to "anſwer me, and if it be as I ſuſpect, every "perſuaſion in my power ſhall be attempted "to turn your parents from their purpoſe."

"Alas!" ſaid Agatha, "I know not if I "ought to diſcloſe the reaſons which compel "me to embrace a life which I have always "contemplated with dread. Duty and ne-"ceſſity have obliged my parents to chuſe "for me, and me to conſent to what other-"wiſe neither they nor I ſhould have deſired.

"The reaſons, I dare not, without my mo-
"ther's permiſſion, reveal; but I will endea-
"vour to obtain it, and the gratitude this
"kindneſs inſpires ſhall never be forgotten."

"Speak not of that, my ſweet friend," returned Madame St. Clermont; "the ſervice I "offer you is no more than I think myſelf "bound to perform; and there are many "whom I have been ſo fortunate as to reſtore "to the world they wiſhed not to renounce. "But to one queſtion you did not reply. "Are you ſure there is no one dearer than "the reſt?"

"Ah!" ſaid Agatha, "there is indeed! "but time and my unremitting endeavours, "when my vows ſhall have made it a duty, "will, I truſt, enable me—not to forget him, "for that can never be, but to remember "him only as Heaven itſelf ſhall authorize. "I will conſider myſelf dead to him and to "all the world, yet will pray for his happi-"neſs here and hereafter. There will be no "crime in that: think you there will?— "for more I could not do!—"

"Come to my heart, ſweet lady!" ſaid Madame

Madame St. Clermont. "No, in thus re-
"garding him there can be no crime. Yet
"have a care that this idea obtrudes not it-
"ſelf on your devotions, except at the mo-
"ment in which you pray for him with
"others who claim your prayers. Remem-
"ber you will be the ſpouſe of God, and not
"even a parent muſt wean your affections
"from him."

Lady Belmont now returned, and Agatha attended her home. She informed her, in part, of the queſtions Madame St. Clermont had put to her, and aſked her permiſſion to inform her of the vow by which ſhe was bound. Lady Belmont conſented, and ſuffered her to go unattended by herſelf to the convent. She informed Madame St. Clermont of the fatal vow, and its occaſion, with every particular concerning herſelf, and the unfortunate attachment which made the world thus dear to her. Madame St. Clermont heard her with tears; and when ſhe had concluded the recital, "hard indeed," ſhe ſaid, "has been your fate: innocent victim of the "guilt of your mother's mother. Yet how

"could

" could ſhe imagine that to dedicate her child
" or her child's child to Heaven, could ex-
" piate her own offence! She ought to have
" retired herſelf to a monaſtery, there by
" the moſt rigid penance have ſought to
" atone for a crime whoſe puniſhment ſhe
" wiſhed rather to caſt on others. I ſay pu-
" niſhment; for where the heart prompts not
" its adoption, the life of a nun is that of
" puniſhment; where it does, it is a life of
" reward and bleſſings. Cruel as it is, I dare
" not adviſe the breach of that vow. Your
" own conſcience, my deareſt lady, is your
" guide, and that you will obey. Had Lady
" Belmont chanced to have adopted a diffe-
" rent method, had ſhe educated you among
" us, you would inſenſibly have loved the
" life you now dread, we ſhould have been
" endeared to you from infancy, and you
" would have been ſpared the pangs your
" unfortunate introduction to ſociety has given
" you. But ſhe was guided by maternal af-
" fection, and in this ſtate of darkneſs and
" imperfection, it is not permitted us to ſee
" into futurity; our longeſt and apparently

" beſt-

" beſt-concerted plans, are defeated by a " thouſand inevitable and unexpected events. " Yet, if all the tender cares of friendſhip, all " the affection of a heart that ſhares your diſ- " treſs and bleeds for it at every pore, can " heal your ſorrows, believe it, ſweet lady, " they ſhall be healed." Agatha with tears expreſſed her gratitude; and Madame St. Clermont's affectionate attentions endeared her to her every day more and more, till ſhe never met her but with ſenſations of pleaſure, nor left her without regret.

When rather more than a month had paſſed, Agatha, ſenſible that the fatal day, however delayed, muſt arrive at laſt, after a painful and ſevere ſtruggle, introduced the fatal ſubject, and propoſed to Lady Belmont the commencement of her year of probation. She heard her with tears of regret and tenderneſs; and with anguiſh yet greater than her own, looked forward to the day fixed for her departure. Agatha watched her mother's countenance, ſhe ſaw her diſtreſs, and ſtrove to alleviate it by feigning a ſerenity foreign to her heart. She would retire to weep, and return

return to ſmile. She expatiated with ſweet deception on the influence the various beauties of the garden had already over her mind and ſpirits. She would then ſpeak (and here her praiſe was unaffected) of the charms of Madame St. Clermont's converſation and that of the ſweet Siſter Agnes. In the firſt emotions of grief, ſhe would ſay, I did not conceive that I could have felt ſo tranquil; but till a trouble arrives, we know not how eaſily it may be endured, nor what bleſſings may be reſerved to mingle with it, and leſſen our affliction.

The fatal day too ſoon arrived; and Agatha, whoſe ſufferings no effort could now conquer or conceal, gazed wiſtfully on every object around her, ſoon to be ſeen no more. "My ſacrificed innocent," ſaid Lady Belmont, whoſe feelings almoſt overpowered her reaſon, "Yes—I have murdered thee! for I "have ſtabbed thy peace, and what is life "without it!" Then kneeling to Agatha, ſhe ſaid, "Do not—O! do not curſe me! "Yet if thou doſt, I can, and will forgive "thee!"

"My

"My dearest mother," said Agatha, "rise "for pity's sake, and talk not thus. To sup- "pose me capable of such guilt is to torture "me beyond every other suffering. Grieve "not thus for me, I conjure you. I will "not deceive you. I am not happy, it is "true; but I am more tranquil and more "composed than I could have imagined it "possible to have been; and time, reason, "and religion, will give me that peace you "wish me. Be comforted if you would have "me so, and if you would not add to my "troubles one greater than all."

Soothed by her tenderness, Lady Belmont became more composed, and, accompanied by Sir Charles, attended her to the convent at the appointed hour, with melancholy resignation.

The separation from Sir Charles was not marked with less anguish than that from Lady Belmont; and all the kind efforts of Madame St. Clermont were exerted to each by turns, while her benevolent heart bled for their distress.

After the usual prayers at the commence-

ment

ment of her noviciate, Agatha was received as one of the ſociety. She attended the ſeveral ſervices, and performed her part in the appointed devotions.—At night, after the ſervice of Complin, which is that performed after ſun-ſet, Madame St. Clermont, taking her hand with an expreſſion of the tendereſt affection, led her to her little cell, "this my beloved friend," ſhe ſaid as they entered it, "contains all the indulgence we think it right "to permit ourſelves in our apartments; and "there are many who would deem even this "too great a luxury. But though I judge it "right to place our ſupreme happineſs in "devotion, I do not therefore believe that "Heaven enjoins that extreme auſterity "which many think it their duty to practice. "But till your ſpirits have recovered the firſt "ſhock they will ſuſtain in a change ſo great "as that from your own ſplendid chamber "to this narrow retreat, I will not quit you."

"Fear not for me," ſaid Agatha; "this is "nothing. O! Madame St. Clermont, a "heart at eaſe is all; and bleſſed with that "even this little cell would ſeem a palace."

"God

"God grant it you, my ſweet lady?" ſaid Madame St. Clermont. Then ſeeing Agatha more tranquil than ſhe had dared to hope, ſhe left her to her repoſe, after embracing her with the utmoſt tenderneſs.

The cell was a ſmall ſquare apartment. The walls of ſtone had no covering. On a table of the ſame materials placed underneath a high Gothic window, ſtood a lamp already burning, and by the ſide of it a ſmall taper ready to be lighted to conduct her to Matins. The curtains of the bed were of white ſtuff. On one ſide of it ſtood a ſolitary chair, and on the other a ſmall cheſt, intended to contain changes of linen, their only wardrobe.

Agatha, not daring to think, after endeavouring to compoſe her ſpirits by prayer, haſtened to bed, where, haraſſed and exhauſted, ſhe dropped aſleep. She was awakened by a loud bell. At the firſt moment unconſcious where ſhe was, or why it tolled, ſhe ſtarted and ſcreamed. At this minute Madame St. Clermont entered, "I was indeed "fearful," ſhe ſaid, "that the bell calling us "to matins might alarm you, and came to "warn

" warn you of it." " It was kind indeed," ſaid Agatha, " but you are, and will be a " mother to me!—"

Madame St. Clermont remained with Agatha while ſhe roſe; then, taking her hand, ſhe conducted her along the gallery to a paſſage which communicated with the chapel. It was midnight; and except the heavy toll of the bell at intervals, no ſound interrupted the ſtillneſs of the night. Every one entered the church in ſilence, her taper in her hand; and as they walked ſlowly along the aiſle a hollow echo repeated the ſound of their feet. As all were not yet aſſembled, Madame St. Clermont led Agatha to the place allotted her, and kneeled herſelf near her in ſilent devotion. Agatha now endeavoured to collect her thoughts, and to implore in theſe ſolemn moments, the bleſſing and protection of Heaven. " And bleſs, O! bleſs," ſhe ſaid, " him for whom it is no crime to implore " thy mercies! Shield and preſerve him in " this ſilent, awful hour! guard him from " every danger! ſweet may be his ſlumbers, " and may Angels hover round his pillow,

" and

"and bleſs his ſleeping or his waking "thoughts." Then not daring to dwell longer on this fatal theme, ſhe offered up her prayers for every other friend. The ſervice now began; and, with a heart glowing with devotion, ſhe joined the choir, and ſeemed, at that moment, to ſoar beyond this world and its circumſcribed poſſeſſions: Heaven itſelf opened to her view!

The ſervice ended, Agatha returned to her cell; but not to ſleep. Her agitated ſpirits forbad even a momentary ſlumber; and when the bell called her to Prime, (the devotion performed at ſun-riſing) ſhe had not cloſed her eyes. She aroſe, and did not again return to bed; but when the morning ſervice was over, walked with Siſter Agnes during more than an hour. She returned refreſhed and revived, and ſtrove by different employments to divert her mind, and chaſe the depreſſion which hung upon it.—Lady Belmont now arrived. "And how is my ſweet girl?" ſhe ſaid, as ſhe entered. "My ſpirits," replied Agatha, with aſſumed chearfulneſs, "are "almoſt all you would wiſh them. And ſee,

"my

" my deareſt mother, how much my induſtry " has already performed:" Shewing her a drawing ſhe had began. " I ſee," ſaid Lady Belmont, " that you are an Angel!"—Agatha turned her head to conceal the tears, which, amid her feigned ſerenity, forced their way, in ſpite of every effort ſhe made to ſuppreſs them.

Lady Belmont remained with Agatha the greateſt part of the morning; and, as ſhe had promiſed, paſſed ſome hours with her during every day; Sir Charles frequently accompanying her.

The ſerenity Agatha had aſſumed, now, in ſome meaſure, became real. Her ſpirits grew more compoſed, and her attempts to render them ſo were unceaſing. She never ſuffered herſelf to paſs a minute unemployed, nor to indulge the fatal idea of Hammond; except during thoſe moments when ſhe prayed for his happineſs. If his beloved image obtruded itſelf, ſhe would whiſper, " Heaven " bleſs him!" then force her thoughts to another ſubject, cruel as was the tranſition, and ſweet as would have been the indulgence.

Theſe efforts, painful and appearing ſcarcely poſſible at firſt, became, by ſlow degrees, leſs difficult; and before the year of her noviciate was expired, ſhe remembered him with that ſerenity of ſoul with which a ſainted ſpirit looks down on thoſe they have left behind; ſtill, perhaps, deſirous of their happineſs, and wiſhing for the moment that ſhall unite them in the realms of bliſs, but that deſire and thoſe wiſhes, though firm and conſtant, yet mild and gentle, and incapable of interrupting the peace of ſuperior beings.

Agatha had written to Mrs. Herbert immediately on her arrival at Iſſoire; aſſuring her of her inviolable friendſhip, and informing her of the life to which ſhe was deſtined, but conjuring her to keep the place of her retreat a ſecret from every one, and, above all, from Mr. Hammond, or her uncle, whoſe benevolence might lead him to purſue her, and to endeavour to ſnatch her from the fate to which neceſſity compelled her, and which his generous efforts, without a poſſibility of changing, would only render more painful. To Mr. Hammond ſhe entreated her to give

every

every assurance of an unalterable friendship, to soothe his sorrows, and to endeavour to pour the balm of consolation to his bosom. "To "the mind of a man of sensibility, my dear "Mrs. Herbert," she wrote, "there is some-"thing in the tenderness and pity of a female "heart more soothing, I have always ima-"gined, than there can be in every exertion "of the most assured friendship from one of "his own sex. A man to a man may blush "to own those sorrows and those weaknesses "which to our tenderer and more susceptible "minds he will not fear to reveal. Be you "then this friend to my Hammond—" She then requested her to break to him, by degrees, her destined situation, which, by totally destroying his hopes, might enable him to conquer his attachment, and restore to him that peace for which she daily prayed.——

She received an answer from Mrs. Herbert, expressive of the tendereſt affection for her, and the severest sorrow at the information her letter contained; conjuring her to reflect before it was too late, nor to plunge herself into fatal and irremediable misery; to listen to the

voice of friendſhip, of nature, of Religion even, nor to ſhut up from the world one whom Heaven had formed to adorn and delight it, to give an example of virtue, and to impart bleſſings to thouſands of her fellow beings. She informed her that Hammond had been dangerouſly ill ſoon after her departure, that her uncle's attendance upon him had been unceaſing, and that his health was then nearly re-eſtabliſhed, but that his friends, believing it likely to be equally ſerviceable to his health and ſpirits, had prevailed upon him to conſent to travel, and that, in the ſpace of a few weeks, he was to ſet out with Mr. Ormiſtace for the Continent; that they propoſed viſiting Italy and others of the Southern parts of Europe during the winter, and in the ſummer were to go to Peterſburg, Stockholm, &c.; that during their abſence ſhe ſhould ſpend the greateſt part of her time with Mr. Crawford and his family, and ſome probably at Sir John Milſon's, as ſhe had no occaſion now to fear adding fuel to Mr. William Milſon's flame by her ſociety, ſince it was entirely extinguiſhed by his new though

hopeleſs paſſion for her friend. She promiſed to break Agatha's ſituation to Hammond in the tendereſt manner poſſible, and aſſured her that if it were within the limits of poſſibility ſhe would yet one day enjoy the pleaſure of her ſociety by viſiting Auvergne; but that ſhe truſted ſhe would yet reflect, nor inflict perpetual miſery on herſelf and all to whom ſhe was dear.

In reply to this, Agatha aſſured Mrs. Herbert that her conduct was the conſequence of long and mature reflection; and that, ſevere as had been the ſtruggle, ſhe had, at laſt, ſhe truſted, forced her wiſhes to be ſubſervient to her duty. She aſſured her of the gratitude her kindneſs inſpired, and bleſſed Mr. Ormiſtace for his friendſhip to Hammond. She promiſed to write often, and entreated Mrs. Herbert to do the ſame, and to inform her of Hammond's health, peace, and ſafety; but to dwell no further on a theme, which, dear as it yet was, ſhe muſt eternally renounce: yet, though dead to him and to every one on earth, it would be no crime to hear and know that he was well and happy. She then anti-

cipated

cipated the period when ſhe ſhould enjoy the bleſſing Mrs. Herbert promiſed of her ſociety in Auvergne; a bleſſing infinitely ſweeter than ſhe had dared to hope was reſerved for her in this exiſtence.

CHAP. IV.

THE winter and the ſummer glided away. Agatha, reſigned to her fate, and ſteady to her purpoſe, ſtrove daily to acquire that preſence of mind which ſhould enable her to ſuſtain the dreaded trial with becoming fortitude.

At length the fatal period came. She beheld its arrival with melancholy yet unſhaken reſolution. Every preparation was made for the awful ceremony. Lady Belmont had procured the habits neceſſary for the occaſion according to Madame St. Clermont's directions.—In perſons of birth and fortune it is uſual to wear a dreſs remarkably ſplendid before they adopt that which beſpeaks their renunciation of every worldly ornament.

On the morning of the appointed day, (which was, as is commonly the caſe on ſuch occaſions, one of thoſe marked by the Romiſh Church as a feſtival) Madame St. Clermont attended Agatha in her cell. "I come, "my beloved friend," ſhe ſaid, "to requeſt "your attendance, if, yet firm in your pur-"poſe, you determine to embrace the life for "which you are prepared."

"Yes, ſaid Agatha," raiſing her claſped hands to Heaven, "He who knows all hearts "ſees that mine is ſincere."

"Come then, my beloved friend," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "the biſhop waits to "put the neceſſary queſtions." Then bringing the dreſs which had been provided for the purpoſe, ſhe aſſiſted Agatha in putting it on. It was a looſe robe of ſilver muſlin, fringed with ſilver intermixed with pearls; a girdle of pearls and diamonds encircled her waiſt, necklaces of the ſame covered her boſom, and one row of large diamonds confined her hair.

Supported by Madame St. Clermont, ſhe now attended the biſhop, a venerable prelate, whoſe countenance beſpoke him the practiſer

as well as teacher of every moral and religious duty. With gentleneſs and benignity he aſked her the accuſtomed queſtions concerning her ſituation, her intention of receiving the veil, and determination to adhere to the vows ſhe was ſoon to make. He explained their nature and the dreadful conſequences of their violation, and repeated the queſtion, if ſhe choſe the life ſhe was preparing to enter.

She replied to all his queſtions with firmneſs and courage; but when Lady Belmont came; when ſhe beheld the parent under whoſe roof ſhe was never more to ſleep, whom with every other that was dear to her ſhe was preparing to renounce for ever, her fortitude forſook her, and ſhe was obliged to retire for ſome minutes to ſubdue her feelings, and to endeavour by prayer and ſupplication to Heaven to revive her fainting ſpirits.

When Agatha returned, Lady Belmont dared not truſt herſelf to ſpeak to her, but catching her hand, and preſſing it to her lips, gazed on her in ſilent anguiſh. Agatha feared equally to ſpeak to her, but by her coun-

tenance whenever Lady Belmont obſerved her, endeavoured to ſay, "Grieve not for me, my "beloved mother, for I am not unhappy."

The bell now ſummoned them to Maſs, and warned them that the ſolemn hour was arrived. Agatha, ſupported on one ſide by Lady Belmont and on the other by Sir Charles, and followed by two of the oldeſt of the nuns, was led to the biſhop in the chapel, who began with the uſual Maſs for the day. Agatha trembled,—but armed with the fortitude ſhe had long ſtudied to obtain, betrayed no other mark of weakneſs or terror; and, joined in every reſponſe with animated piety. The prieſt her confeſſor now chaunted an anthem, importing, that the bridegroom was coming and their lamps ſhould be prepared; and as he ſung, Agatha was led by the nuns to light her lamp at a fire kindled for that purpoſe! The prieſt then preſented her to the biſhop; and, kneeling before him, ſhe repeated the vows by which ſhe renounced the world, and lived henceforth to God alone. The biſhop now rehearſed the duties of her ſtate, and the crozier in his hand,

hand, gave her a ſolemn benediction; after which ſhe retired to put on her religious habit, attended by the two nuns. Her beautiful hair was now cut off, and ſtripped of every ornament and clad in the plain veſtments of a nun, ſhe was led once more to the chapel to complete the ceremony. The choir chaunted as ſhe entered, and being again led to the biſhop, he put on the ring, ſignifying her myſtical union with Chriſt, the virgin crown, and veil. She was then conducted to the centre of the aiſle, where, falling proſtrate on the earth, ſhe was covered by a black pall, and the whole choir ſurrounded her, ſinging on their knees the following requiem to her ſoul, myſtically departed its earthly abode.

Dead to the world, and all the world contains,
Thy body to its grave we now conſign;
Life's fleeting joys thy ſoaring ſoul diſdains,
For Heaven and Immortality are thine!

See from this duſt her ſainted ſpirit flee!
Father of Heaven! ſhe lives! ſhe lives to Thee!

Mark where Ambition, Pride, and Senſual Bliſs,
Stabbed in this grave, expiring curſes breathe!
While, on her child, Religion prints her kiſs,
And Fame for her prepares a deathleſs wreathe!

Lo! from the duſt her ſainted ſpirit flies!
It mounts! it mounts! a Siſter of the Skies!

Myriads of Angels hail her ſpotleſs ſoul,
And 'grave on adamant the Virgin Vow:
Borne on their wings behold her reach the Goal!
Vile lump of earth! where are thy pleaſures now?

She flies—ſhe ſpurns them for that bleſt abode,
Where, dead to Sin, ſhe only lives to God!

When the words "Thy body to its grave" were ſung, a dreadful ſcream was heard, and Agatha recognized her mother's voice, who, unable to bear the ſolemn ſcene before her, ſcreamed and fainted, and was carried lifeleſs out of the church. With agony not to be deſcribed, Agatha waited the termination of the ſolemnity; while, regardleſs of her own ſituation, ſhe thought only of her mother, felt only for her.—The anthem ended, little remained to be performed. With an exhortation

tion to the Lady Abbeſs to whom Agatha (now Siſter Conſtance) was preſented by the biſhop, the ſervice cloſed.

Agatha now flew to Lady Belmont, whom the exertions of Sir Charles and of the ſervants of the convent had nearly recovered. At ſight of Agatha in the habit of a nun ſhe again ſcreamed, and was with difficulty kept from fainting.

" My mother! my deareſt mother!" ſaid Agatha, kneeling to her, " bleſs, bleſs your " child. Do you not ſee me—know me?"

" My child!" ſhe exclaimed; then, looking at her dreſs, and turning from her in agony, " dreadful! dreadful change!" ſhe ſaid.

" What change, my beloved mother? am " I not ſtill the ſame—ſtill your Agatha, your " own Agatha?——What is this trifling al- " teration of dreſs! can the moſt ſplendid " habit confer a moment's peace upon an " aching or repentant heart? No! how many " wretches who have bartered their integrity " for gold, have felt the fallacy of ſuch an " hope! This plain garb will be dear to me,

" will make me happy, ſince every time I " look upon it, it will remind me that I have " done my duty to God and to my mother."

" Excellent creature!" ſaid Sir Charles, his voice faltering, and the feelings of his heart almoſt too great for utterance.

" I know not when I have felt ſo happy," continued Agatha. " When any thing we " have feared has actually come to paſs, our " minds ſeem relieved, as from a burthen. Our " apprehenſions render almoſt every thing " more terrible than we find it in reality: Do " they not, Madam?" purſued ſhe, appealing to Madame St. Clermont, as if to intreat her to aſſiſt her in ſpeaking comfort to her afflicted parents.

" Certainly, my dear ſiſter," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, weeping as ſhe ſpoke.

" Then too," ſaid Agatha, " have I not " to thank you for giving me another parent " in my dear Madame St. Clermont? Fortu- " nate, fortunate Agatha! to be bleſt with " two mothers—two *ſuch* mothers!"

" Do you hear her?" ſaid Lady Belmont, turning to Sir Charles, " do you hear the " ſweet ſuffering angel?"

"Call me your child, your Agatha; call "me not a ſufferer. What are the ſufferings "of thoſe who enjoy the ſweet conſciouſneſs "of a ſelf-approving heart! Bleſs then your "daughter, your reſigned, and, could ſhe "ſee you once more tranquil and happy, ſhe "would be your *happy* Agatha."

"God bleſs thee, my ſoul's darling!" ſaid Lady Belmont; "and make us humble in-"ſtruments in his hands to reward your un-"exampled excellence!"

"Yes," ſaid Sir Charles; "it ſhall be the "ſole ſtudy, as it will be the only comfort of "our lives to adminiſter to your wants and "wiſhes."

During the whole time Sir Charles and Lady Belmont continued at the convent, Agatha uſed every exertion to leſſen their grief by appearing to feel none herſelf. Madame St. Clermont ſaw her efforts, and trembled for their conſequence; and with too much reaſon, for when at night ſhe attended her to her cell, ſhe found her too ill, and her ſpirits too violently agitated, to make it ſafe to leave her.

"O! Madame St. Clermont!" ſaid Aga-

tha, as ſhe entered her cell, " have I indeed " committed a crime when I thought to per- " form a duty? Heaven knows! but I have " a ſenſation of horror I never felt before, a " conſciouſneſs of I know not what of terror " and repentance."

" No, my ſweet friend," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " you have acted nobly, and " Heaven which ſees your virtue will reward " it ultimately, though you ſuffer now. The " ſenſation you deſcribe ſprings not from " guilt or from a conſciouſneſs of crime; it " is the pain attendant on the recollection that " you have done a deed, which, though vir- " tuous, is irrevocable. Time, as it habitu- " ates you to the idea, will ſoften the pain; " and, with a ſoul heroic as yours, fear not " but you will yet be happy."

Thus kindly did Madame St. Clermont attempt to ſoothe Agatha. When ſhe was in bed ſhe ſat by her in ſilence, in hopes ſhe might drop aſleep; but if for a moment ſhe cloſed her eyes, ſhe ſtarted and awoke in horror. Madame St. Clermont obſerving that her watchfulneſs greatly encreaſed the ſymptoms

toms of fever, gave her a ſtrong opiate, which had the deſired effect; ſhe ſunk into a ſlumber as ſweet as it was ſalutary. And when, at laſt ſhe awoke, ſhe appeared reſigned and calm, though ſo feeble and languid as to be unable to walk without ſupport.

Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, whoſe ſufferings had not been leſs than thoſe of Agatha, were little better. When they ſent early in the morning to enquire after Agatha's health, Madame St. Clermont wrote to aſſure them that they had no cauſe for apprehenſion; but ſhe adviſed them not to attempt to ſee her that day, as ſhe was convinced the efforts ſhe would make to ſeem well and happy in their preſence would again overpower her delicate frame. Aſſured of Madame St. Clermont's tenderneſs to Agatha, and ſcarcely able themſelves to bear the interview, they conſented to delay ſeeing her till the day following.

When they came the day after, they found her infinitely better than they had reaſon to expect. The forced vivacity ſhe had aſſumed was fled; but in its place they ſaw a calmneſs

and compoſure which promiſed to reſtore in time the peace they ſo ardently deſired her to poſſeſs; and to procure which they would have endured every poſſible calamity with tranſport.

Agatha became by degrees more tranquil than ſhe had felt before her vows. She renewed her own endeavours to engage and intereſt her mind by every innocent purſuit; while the ſociety of Madame St. Clermont and Siſter Agnes was a perpetual ſource of comfort and delight. Sir Charles and Lady Belmont received from London a monthly ſupply of new publications, muſic, and prints; and, in their ſeaſons, they were ſupplied with roots and ſeeds of the choiceſt flowers: anxious in every trifle to give her pleaſure, they even procured ſome roots from Haarlem at a conſiderable expence. Agatha received their endeavours to amuſe her with a gratitude which even pained her; and her generous heart always reproached her as wanting in the acknowledgements with which ſhe ſtrove to repay their attentions. "Be happy my "Agatha, they would ſay, "and we are

more

" more than repaid; be happy, and we ſhall " not think we live in vain." But Agatha looked beyond her own gratification, and felt the better half of her pleaſure from the ability thus afforded her of amuſing and pleaſing others. Idolized by every ſiſter in the convent, ſhe delighted to return their kindneſs by imparting pleaſure to each; and her books, her flowers, her prints, and her muſic were not leſs the property of every other than of herſelf.

But a ſource of delight more noble and more congenial to her heart ſhe now diſcovered,—which repaid her for all ſhe had ſuffered, made exiſtence a real bleſſing, and rendered her not only tranquil but happy. In the ſublime conſolations of Charity ſhe ſought and found relief from every lurking ſorrow. Daily ſuppſied by Lady Belmont with ſums for the purpoſe, the ſick, the aged, and unfortunate came to her grate, told their tale of woe, and departed relieved and happy. The orphan found in her its loſt parents, and ſhe made the widow's heart to ſing for joy. On young women, who, with the approbation of their parents,

parents, beſtowed their hearts on thoſe who deſerved them, and whoſe virtues in other reſpects entitled them to her favour, ſhe beſtowed ſmall portions at their marriages as a ſtimulus to virtue, and a reward for filial piety. Nor did her charity ſtop here. Independent of pecuniary aſſiſtance, many were thoſe who had reaſon to bleſs her as their preſerver. She inſtituted a little ſchool in the convent for the inſtruction of a number of poor girls, and by the virtues ſhe inculcated made them examples of virtue and piety to others. She had early ſtudied among other purſuits, the general principles of medicine, and had received inſtructions both from her mother and Miſs Hammond, by whom ſhe had been often led to the ſick bed of her poor neighbours. That ſtudy now became, from the power it afforded her of beſtowing benefit and eaſing ſufferings, a ſource of the pureſt delight and higheſt ſatisfaction. Numbers of poor from even diſtant parts of the province flocked to the convent, on the days appointed, to receive her medicines and advice. Her piety and charity rendered her

the

the theme of every tongue, and the ſubject of many a prayer; and ſhe was generally known by the name of the Angel of Auvergne.

CHAP. V.

TWO years thus paſſed, and Agatha became at length, peaceful, ſerene, and happy. Siſter Agnes whom every day more and more endeared to her, as the purity and tenderneſs of her heart became daily more evident, was walking with her one evening, and expreſſing the friendſhip which attached them to each other, "one only proof," ſhe continued, "remains to be given of it, and "that has always been withheld: we have ne-"ver confided to each other the ſtory of our "lives, nor of thoſe ſufferings in the world "which have induced us to take refuge from "its tyranny in this peaceful retreat."

"The circumſtances which have befallen "me," replied Agatha, "are ſome of them "ſuch as I ſhould not think myſelf juſti-"fied in revealing, even to you; and there

"are

" are others I fear to retrace, which to re-
" peat might open afreſh wounds long ſince
" healed, and renew feelings which it has
" coſt me months of miſery to ſubdue. The
" ſame motives may not render conceal-
" ment a duty in you; yet reflect ſeriouſly,
" and if on recollection you are ſenſible that
" you may revive ſorrows now paſſed, joined
" to a fatal remembrance of the world you
" have quitted, let me adviſe you to withhold
" from me and every one the dangerous re-
" cital, however ſweet may be the temporary
" indulgence it might afford you. I want
" no freſh proof of the friendſhip which has
" been ſo long a ſource of delight to my
" heart, and the ſincerity of which I have
" never for a moment ſuſpected."

" For worlds, my deareſt friend," ſaid Siſter Agnes, " would I not ſolicit a relation
" which would diſtreſs you; and forgive me,
" that, ignorant of the conſequences, I ven-
" tured to aſk it. But from my recital I
" have nothing to apprehend. Each event,
" long ſince over, paſſes every day in review
" before me. The bleſſings I once knew I

" remember

" remember but as a dream, which was too
" ſweet to be laſting; and from the contem-
" plation of the fleeting and deluſive enjoy-
" ments of this life I learn to look forward
" with encreaſed tranſport to that for which
" I am preparing myſelf, where every bliſs
" ſhall be as laſting as it is exquiſite."

" Yet once more," ſaid Agatha, " let me
" warn you not to deceive yourſelf. Snatch-
" ing from memory a ſhadow only of depart-
" ed bliſs, you may perhaps find a ſad reality
" of miſery."

" Far from it, my kind friend," ſaid Siſter Agnes. " Here, ſerene and peaceful, if not
" happy, I look back on the world as on the
" cruel ſurge which wrecked my hapleſs veſ-
" ſel, and bleſs this haven where I reſt ſecure
" from future ſtorms. Not leſs ſweet is it to
" the traveller to recount the dangers he has
" eſcaped, while his family eye him with
" wonder and delight, than it will be to me
" to repeat my trials paſt, and the ſorrows I
" have been enabled by religion to ſuſtain."

" Loſing my other ſiſters and a brother
" very early in life, I was left an only child

" to

" to parents, whoſe memory I am bound to
" revere, and who, had it pleaſed Heaven to
" ſpare them to me, might have ſaved me
" from the evils I have ſince known. My
" father, the Count de Vermueil, on the death
" of his own ſon, adopted in his place Lewis
" Henry Dorville, then only ſix years of age.
" Deſtined for each other, if no repugnance
" on our part prevented it, we were brought
" up together; and our affection was all their
" moſt ſanguine wiſhes could deſire. Dor-
" ville had no thought, no wiſh but his
" Emily, while, even in my childhood, I de-
" lighted to believe I lived only for him.
" The only conteſt we ever knew was who
" ſhould ſacrifice moſt to the wiſhes of the
" other; but in this Dorville was generally
" the victor, and forced me to accept in his
" ſtead the offered pleaſure, or to ſuffer him
" to perform for me the unwelcome taſk.
" Every little treaſure we poſſeſſed belonged
" equally to each, and every trouble as well
" as every pleaſure was ſhared between us. If
" I wept, his tears flowed in concert; if I
" ſmiled, he was gaiety itſelf. As the amuſe-

" ments

" ments of youth ſupplanted thoſe of child-
" hood, theſe ſtill were only dear to each
" in proportion as they were ſo to the other."

" When we were of years to govern with
" prudence and propriety, the houſhold com-
" mitted to our charge, my father purchaſed
" an elegant habitation for us, and the day
" that was to unite us inſeparably was fixed.
" But a malignant and contagious diſtemper
" broke out in the neighbourhood. My fa-
" ther and mother both fell victims to it;
" Dorville and I, though attacked by it,
" were enabled by youth to ſtruggle with the
" malady, and lived to pay the laſt tribute of
" grief and affection to their remains. Duty,
" propriety, and filial tenderneſs, equally
" prompted us to delay the promiſed bleſſ-
" ing of our union, and we determined that
" not leſs than a year ſhould be paſſed in
" paying that reſpect to the memory of our
" parents to which it was ſo juſtly entitled.
" Equal ſufferers, it was the ſole endeavour
" of each to mitigate the afflictions of the
" other, and we bleſſed Heaven that, on the
" trying occaſion, we poſſeſſed one friend in

" whoſe

" whoſe tenderneſs we could ſeek and find
" relief.

" After ſomewhat more than a month had
" paſſed, and the firſt violent emotions of
" grief had began to give way to mild regret,
" a perſon came to ſettle in a houſe near to
" ours, who, whenever ſhe met us, attempt-
" ed, by every poſſible attention to us both,
" to ſhew the part ſhe took in our diſtreſs,
" and the intereſt our tender attachment in-
" ſpired. Delighted, as ſhe would ſay, to wit-
" neſs a love which raiſed its poſſeſſors above
" the common herd of mortals, ſhe longed to
" be admitted to our ſociety and friendſhip;
" and we knew not how to reſiſt entreaties
" which flattered at once our feelings and the
" deareſt vanity of our hearts: for if there
" was any thing in which we took a pride it
" was our love. Till then, all the world to
" each other, we had neither ſought nor ad-
" mitted any other ſociety.

" Madame Frevillarde, which was her
" name, was far from young, but ſhe was
" ſprightly, animated, and intereſting. Tall
" and large, ſhe was rather handſome than

" pretty;

" pretty ; but ſtruck by the quick ſparkle of
" fine eyes you could hardly contemplate her
" other features : and well—too well did ſhe
" know to employ them !

" By degrees, her attentions to me dimi-
" niſhed, and thoſe to Dorville encreaſed.
" Whatever I happened to advance in con-
" verſation, ſhe had the art, though in the
" moſt polite and reſpectful manner ima-
" ginable, to prove was erroneous in its idea
" or principle ; and unaccuſtomed to the
" ſubtilties of logic, I knew not how to
" controvert arguments, which I often diſ-
" covered to be ſpecious. Dorville's re-
" marks, on the other hand, ſhe as highly
" applauded, and, by reaſoning equally art-
" ful, proved the juſtice of every poſition of
" his. Dorville thus learned, by degrees, to
" contemn my poor abilities, and, charmed
" by the flattery of Madame Frevillarde, to
" admire his own, and hers who diſcovered
" them. Men are, I believe, notwithſtand-
" ing the general opinion to the contrary,
" more the dupes of flattery than women :
" It requires, perhaps, a more judicious and

" guarded

" guarded application; but, where it *is* ju-
" diciouſly applied, it rarely fails of effect.

" Madame Frevillarde had a delightful
" voice, and ſung with equal taſte and judge-
" ment. Dorville was paſſionately fond of
" muſic, and nature had not gifted me with
" a voice—though to pleaſe him I had learn-
" ed ſeveral airs on the harp, with which I
" accompanied his violin, and which, in for-
" mer times, he thought delightful. But
" my poor harp was neglected and deſpiſed.
" If I attempted to play, the inſtrument was
" out of tune, the ſtrings jarred, the air I be-
" gan was inſipid, and *if we wanted muſic,*
" *Madame Frevillarde would perhaps oblige us*
" *with a ſong.* Deſirous to exert my little
" efforts to pleaſe, I more than once offered
" to accompany her voice; but ſhe diſco-
" vered that it did not accord with the harp,
" and to the violin only ſhe had been accuſ-
" tomed to ſing.

" Dorville was fond of poetry, and in ſome
" moments of tenderneſs had often written a
" few lines which he preſented to me as tributes
" to his love. I received them with delight,

" and

" and preſerved them as ſacred treaſures;
" and though I poſſeſſed not the talent my-
" ſelf, was charmed with it in him: Madame
" Frevillarde unfortunately did. She took
" up, one day, a book of receipts, which, at
" my poor mother's requeſt, I had collected
" and copied in order to aſſiſt me in houſe-
" keeping. In the firſt page of this, Dorville
" had written with a pencil.

Take near an hundred harmleſs wiles,
And full ten thouſand charming ſmiles,
The downcaſt eye, and crimſon'd cheek
Which own a love no words can ſpeak;
With many a vow, (our joy and pride!)
To know no other love beſide.
Theſe form the dear, the true receipt,
Which makes our tenderneſs complete,
Makes ev'ry hour replete with bliſs,
And every moment ſweet as this.

" Madame Frevillarde took up the book
" as it lay in the window, and read the lines
" to herſelf. Dorville coloured as ſhe read
" them; perhaps imagining the ſimple ef-
" fuſions of his heart in a moment of inge-

" nuous tenderneſs too incorrect for her in-
" ſpection, and perhaps aſhamed of that love
" which had been once not more his delight
" than pride. She ſmiled, and holding out
" her hand, ſaid, 'lend me your pencil Dor-
" ville.' He gave it her in ſome confuſion,
" yet apparently encouraged by the look of
" approbation ſhe gave him when ſhe had
" done reading. She wrote theſe lines under
his.

Not one among thoſe charming lines
The real force of love defines.
'Tis mingled ſtill with chaſte reſpect,
Love's genuine cauſe and ſure effect.
Though heir to ev'ry miſer's pelf,
'Twill own no treaſure but itſelf.
True to the object of its choice,
It hears no muſic but her voice.
Though twenty learned ſires might preach,
'Twould own ſhe only knew to teach.
Nouriſh'd by doubts, with tremors fill'd,
By cold ſecurity 'tis kill'd.
Who would its genuine tranſports gain,
Muſt with each pleaſure know a pain.

" Delightful!" ſaid Dorville, as he read
" the

the lines over her ſhoulder. "You ſhall read "them preſently, Emily," ſaid Madame Frevillarde turning to me, "and ſhall tell me if "they bear any reſemblance to your own re-"ply to the ſweet verſes before us."

"I made none," ſaid I coldly.

"What! not a line? Surely they were "entitled to an anſwer at leaſt!"

"Emily has no talent for poetry," ſaid Dorville, with a contempt I had never ſeen him expreſs before.

"Unable to bear treatment ſo different "from what I had been accuſtomed to re-"ceive from him, I could not refrain from "tears, though my pride made me ſtruggle "hard to check them."

"Really," ſaid Madame Frevillarde, "I "think the poor dear girl is jealous of our "talents, Dorville. Then turning to me, and "taking my hand with affected condeſcen-"ſion, I would not have you hurt, my dear, "at a ſuperiority which ſprings merely from "accident; Dorville and I poſſeſs the talent "of poetry from nature, and it is not there-"fore a merit in either of us."

"I deſire no talents," ſaid I, withdrawing my hand, with an anger I did not endeavour to hide, "I deſire no talents, which may be "perverted to the worſt of purpoſes; to "plant the thorns of diſcontent in the boſoms "of the innocent, or to tear aſunder two "hearts connected by duty, habit, and in-"clination."

"Madame Frevillarde, whoſe tears were "always ready to flow when it was proper or "neceſſary to call in their aſſiſtance, burſt "into tears. "This from you, Emily!" ſhe ſaid; "I neither deſerved nor expected it. "Dorville, ſpeak for me; 'twas in defending "you that I incurred the anger of our mutual "friend. Surely, purſued ſhe, there can be "no crime if nature has given us a ſimilarity "of ſentiments and taſtes: where this is the "caſe, the mind naturally ſeeks the ſociety "of its counterpart."

"Dorville had beheld my *real* tears, which "he ſaw me at the ſame time endeavouring "to ſuppreſs, with coolneſs and indifference; "thoſe of Madame Frevillarde, forced and "indulged, appeared to wound him to the "ſoul.

" ſoul. " Cruel Girl!" ſaid he to me, in-
" dignantly; then, turning to Madame Fre-
" villarde, he took her hand with an expreſ-
" ſion of tenderneſs and pity, conjuring her
" to be comforted.

" She did not appear inſenſible to his ef-
" forts to conſole her, and taking my hand,
" Come, my friend," ſhe ſaid, " I was per-
" haps too eaſily wounded; but all hearts
" are not alike—and mine cannot bear the
" ſhadow of unkindneſs. Dorville, here is
" my other hand; and now we are all friends,
" and happy as before."

" My dear Madame Frevillarde!" ſaid
" Dorville, kiſſing the hand ſhe gave him.

" Why always Madame Frevillarde?" ſhe
" replied; " I call you Dorville, and Made-
" moiſelle de Vermueil, Emily, with the fa-
" miliarity of an old friend: let me then be
" Clara. Obſerve me—I deſire it of you
" both as a mark of friendſhip."

" Dorville promiſed to obey her. Incenſ-
" ed at her artifice, which would have been
" palpable to all eyes not blinded by vanity
" and ſelf-love, I made no reply. I could

" not have ſpoken with temper; and I fear-
" ed to irritate Dorville, and encreaſe his
" indifference to me and partiality to her;
" too well aſſured, from the ſpecimen I had
" already had, whoſe part he would take in a
" quarrel.

" Madame Frevillarde had had two huſ-
" bands, and was therefore, perhaps, an adept
" in the art of pleaſing and managing man-
" kind; and an artleſs girl, with no guide
" but nature and ſincere affection was little
" able to cope with the artifices of a woman
" who had made their foibles her ſtudy, and
" knew how to turn them to her advantage;
" and who was arrived at that age of which
" it has been obſerved, that if a woman
" is leſs lovely, ſhe knows better how to
" love.

" I wiſhed to ſpeak to Dorville alone, but
" he never gave me an opportunity. If I
" brought my work to ſit with him, he pre-
" tended buſineſs; or if he remained in the
" room, took up his violin, and when I
" ſpoke, either did not, or affected not to
" hear me. Certain, however, inexperienc-

" ed

" ed as I was, that a wandering heart is not
" to be recalled by anger or ill humour, I
" ſtudied to be as attentive to his wiſhes as
" formerly, and if he ſignified his deſire of
" any trifle, made it my buſineſs to procure it
" inſtantly. But in vain. My attentions
" paſſed unheeded; and every day gave added
" proofs of his attachment to Madame Fre-
" villarde, and indifference, if not diſlike,
" to me. Yet even then, though ſtung by
" jealouſy, and mortified by coldneſs, I lov-
" ed him, and preferred his happineſs to my
" own. My parents had bequeathed their
" property equally between us, not doubting
" that it was the ſame thing to which they
" left it, and wiſhing by this to ſay, as with
" their laſt words, that they conſidered us
" both as their children. Had Madame
" Frevillarde poſſeſſed the qualities of mind
" and heart which would have enſured Dor-
" ville's happineſs in an union with her, I
" would not have heſitated a moment; I
" would not have ſought to recal a heart
" which might have known ſuperior happi-
" neſs in the poſſeſſion of another: his for-

" tune ſhould have been his immediately, and " I, the only bar to his wiſhes, have been " removed for ever from his ſight. But I " was but too certain that he never could be " permanently happy with a woman of her " character; the veil muſt at laſt drop off, " he muſt ſee his infatuation and lament its " conſequences. I determined, therefore, to " wait with patience; and, in the mean time, " to leave no means untried, in my power to " deviſe, to pleaſe him, and regain his loſt " affection.

" But how ſhall I tell you the ſad ſequel of " my love! O! ſiſter Conſtance! if ever you " have known what it is to love, to feel your " happineſs depend upon another, in whom " every hope and wiſh is centred, you may " imagine what I felt when I waited in vain " for Dorville one fatal morning. I had " dreſſed the breakfaſt table with flowers, had " gathered our grapes with my own hand, " and ſat down expecting his arrival. Hour " after hour paſſed, and no Dorville appear- " ed. I enquired of the ſervants, but he " had not been ſeen. I ſent one of them to

" his

" his room, and he was fled: O! Conſtance!
" fled for ever, and with Madame Frevil-
" larde, as I ſoon, too ſoon diſcovered.

" I received no meſſage from either of
" them for more than a week, nor could
" learn what route they had taken. At
" length I received a few peremptory lines
" from Madame Dorville, as ſhe then, alas!
" was, demanding her huſband's fortune:
" From Dorville himſelf I received none—
" he was withheld from writing either by
" ſhame or remorſe. It would have been in
" my power to diſpute his fortune, and pro-
" bably with ſucceſs, ſince my poor father's
" will ran, 'To Lewis Henry Dorville, my
' adopted ſon, and intended huſband of my
' daughter, Emily de Vermueil, I deviſe one
' half of my property to be paid him on the
' day of their marriage.' But this was ſo
" far from my wiſhes or intentions, that, had
" all the fortune been left at my diſpoſal, he
" ſhould have had half of it to ſhare with
" my happy rival. Certain, however, that
" her integrity was not to be depended upon,
" and wiſhing, for his ſake even, to whom

" it might hereafter be ſerviceable, not to
" lay myſelf open to her artifices, ſince ſhe
" might probably claim the whole of my
" property, under pretence that his ſhare had
" not been received, I ſent the amount of
" half my poſſeſſions of every kind, which
" I had firſt had legally eſtimated, by a per-
" ſon on whom I could depend, to receive a
" written releaſe from Dorville as to any
" further demands upon me. I then ſold the
" houſe I inhabited, ſince every ſpot around me
" awakened ſome dear and fatal remembrance,
" as well as that which had been purchaſed
" for us by my parents, and took a ſmall one
" ſeveral leagues diſtant from my former
" abode. There I reſided two years, a prey
" to dejection and ſorrow; with no other
" conſolation than the conſciouſneſs that I
" deſerved not my fate: and that, my deareſt
" ſiſter, is of all others the greateſt. No!
" let my happy rival, I would ſay, exult in
" the bleſſings ſhe has unjuſtly acquired; I
" would not exchange this lonely abode, this
" iſolated life for hers—for her feelings where
" every joy is poiſoned by remorſe, and the

" pureſt

" pureſt ſources of felicity polluted by " treachery and guilt. But may Heaven " bleſs Dorville, and preſerve *him* from re- " morſe! O! may he forget that there exiſts " one, whoſe life he has robbed of all that " rendered it deſirable, one whoſe hopes he " has blaſted, as the peſtilential vapour de- " ſtroys at once the ſource of vegetation, and " leaves the face of nature a deſert—one, " who deſerved his love! deſerved a better " fate!

" Still anxious for Dorville's happineſs, I " employed a perſon to enquire, and give me " ſecret information from time to time of " his ſituation and domeſtic comforts; and " learned, to my ſincere regret, that he was " far from happy; that his circumſtances " were believed to be deranged, partly owing " to debts contracted by Madame Dorville " before her marriage with him, and partly " to her extravagance afterwards. As I liv- " ed at a ſmall expence myſelf, I could af- " ford to ſpare ſums from time to time, " which I contrived to ſend under feigned " names, and on different pretences; ſince I

" could not bear that, for his ſake, for the
" ſake of what I knew he would ſuffer, he
" ſhould know from whence they came.

" At length I heard that Madame Dor-
" ville and he were at variance, and had ſe-
" parated, it was believed, for ever; and
" ſome time after, learned, from too certain
" information, that he laboured under a dan-
" gerous malady, and was thought to be haſ-
" tening to his grave; that Madame Dor-
" ville, immerſed in the gaieties of Paris,
" appeared indifferent to the relations ſent
" her of his illneſs, and left him to periſh,
" friendleſs and unattended.

" This was too much. My love, outraged
" as it had been, returned with more tender-
" neſs than ever: my heart bled for his ſuf-
" ferings; and I determined, be the conſe-
" quence what it would, to fly to, and com-
" fort him in his laſt moments.

" I took poſt immediately, attended by the
" gentleman, a man of years and reſpectabi-
" lity, who had procured me the melancholy
" intelligence, and one female ſervant, and
" arrived, after travelling without intermiſ-

" ſion

" ſion during four days and nights, at the
" chateau of Aylmer in Normandy where he
" reſided.

" Our chaiſe ſtopped at the gate. The
" driver went to the houſe, and knocked re-
" peatedly at the door—but no one came.
" During this interval we contemplated the
" melancholy ſcene around us. The garden,
" which had gone to ruins, bore yet ſome
" veſtiges of former magnificence. The
" gates were ſuperbly carved; and images,
" which had once been beautiful, were placed
" on pedeſtals on each ſide of them: But the
" pedeſtals themſelves were broken and tot-
" tering. The high wall, which ſurrounded
" the garden, was broken down in many
" places, and fragments of it lay ſcattered
" among the few herbs which grew wild
" beneath it. Thoſe which had formerly
" been the walks were overgrown with graſs;
and every thing around had the appearance
an uninhabited and neglected ſpot.

" At laſt, an elderly woman, pale, feeble,
" and dejected, opened ſlowly the door. We
" enquired if M. Dorville did not reſide
" there.

" there. " He lives here now," ſaid the " woman, " but for how long Heaven " knows; for he is almoſt at his laſt " gaſp."

" And Madame Dorville?"

" O! ſhe never comes nigh him; and " thank God ſhe does not, that he may at " leaſt die in peace."

" Great God!——And what advice has " he?"

" He had a doctor; but the doctor could " do nothing for him—the diſorder, he ſaid, " lay upon his mind: And well it might; " for they ſay he left the beſt of young crea- " tures to marry the wickedeſt lady that per- " haps ever breathed."

" And who nurſes—who attends him?"

" I do; and one girl, and his own man. " And we ſit up with him in our turns, and " would do any thing for him, for he has " been the beſt of maſters.—God help him! " —As for Madame Dorville, ſhe has got " all his money in her own hands, and he " would have ſtarved long ago, for he has " not ſpirits or courage to ſeek after her and

" get

" get his own, if ſomebody or other had not
" ſent him money from time to time; and it
" has ſeemed to drop from the clouds, as one
" may ſay, for he never knew why it came,
" nor where it came from."

" I could not bear this, my deareſt ſiſter,
" and ſunk into my maid's arms, who ſup-
" ported, and wept over me. When I was
" ſomewhat relieved by my tears, I enquired
" if we might not be permitted to ſee M.
" Dorville. I ſaid I was an old friend, and
" had always a great value for him, and wiſh-
" ed to comfort him in his illneſs. She ſaid
" ſhe would aſk him; but it had been ſo long
" ſince he had ſeen any one but themſelves
" and the prieſt who came to pray by him,
" that ſhe did not know how he would bear
" it. She now conducted us into a ſa-
" loon, where ſhe left us while ſhe went to
" him.

" When ſhe was gone, we conſulted on the
" beſt method of breaking my arrival to him;
" fearing that, in his weak ſtate, the ſhock
" would be too great for him, if he ſaw me
" without being prepared for the interview.

" M.

" M. Loverd, which was the name of the
" gentleman who accompanied me, propoſed
" that he ſhould go to him firſt, and tell him,
" that he had ſeen a friend who had enquired
" much concerning him: that he ſhould
" break to him, by degrees, that that friend
" was Mademoiſelle de Vermueil; and, at
" length, when he was become familiar with
" my idea, ſhould confeſs that I had accom-
" panied him to ſee and attend him, if by
" my attendance I could be any conſolation
" to him. As we could deviſe no better me-
" thod, this was, at laſt, agreed upon.

" The woman returned, telling us, that
" M. Dorville rather wiſhed than otherwiſe
" to ſee us; but adviſed us not to go up to-
" gether, leſt the ſight of three ſtrangers
" ſhould be too much for him. This was
" what we had intended; and M. Loverd
" went with the woman, leaving me and my
" ſervant in the ſaloon.

" The inſide of the houſe, though leſs ru-
" inous than its appearance without, bore,
" like that, the marks of decayed magnifi-
" cence. The tarniſhed gold fringe on the

" chairs

" chairs and curtains, the ſoiled, and in
" ſome places, torn hangings, ſpoke their
" owner like themſelves faſt falling to de-
" cay.

" After waiting nearly an hour in a ſtate of
" terror and ſuſpenſe, M. Loverd returned,
" and aſſured me, that Dorville, though
" dreadfully agitated at firſt, was now calm
" and prepared to ſee me: that, ſhocked at
" the mention of my name, it had been long
" before he could render his ſpirits ſufficient-
" ly calm to enable him to bear the diſcloſure
" of my being actually there. M. Loverd
" then, in the tendereſt manner, conjured
" me to ſupport my own ſpirits, nor to add
" by my agitation to the ſufferings of Dor-
" ville. He bid me expect to ſee one whom
" remorſe and ſickneſs had worn to the ſha-
" dow of what he once had been; whoſe
" feeble voice could ſcarcely be heard at a
" ſmall diſtance; while his words were inter-
" rupted at intervals by groans which would
" pierce my very ſoul.

" I endeavoured to aſſume the fortitude ſo
" requiſite as well for his ſake as my own;

" and

" and leaning on my maid's arm, was con-
" ducted by M. Loverd up a ſtone ſtair-caſe,
" and from thence, through a long and
" gloomy gallery, to Dorville's apartment at
" the end of it.

" Unable to lie down in his bed, he was
" ſupported in it by pillows; and the image
" of death itſelf was imprinted on his lan-
" guid and emaciated countenance. Thoſe
" eyes which, when I had laſt ſeen them,
" ſparkled with the fire of youth and vivaci-
" ty, now, ſunk in their ſockets, were dim
" and lifeleſs. Thoſe lips, which had been
" wont to give utterance to a thouſand ani-
" mated and intereſting ſubjects, now, white
" and parched, ſeemed to have loſt all power
" of motion.

" He turned his head as we entered, and
" with a faint and agonizing ſmile beheld my
" approach. O! that ſmile! never will it
" forſake my memory—methinks I ſee it
" now!——" Emily!" he ſaid; and held
" out his poor trembling hand.

" I flew to him, and kneeled by his bed
" ſide. " My Dorville! my friend! and do

" I again

" I again ſee you? And I preſſed his pale
" hand to my lips."

" O Emily! how—how have you been
" avenged! dear, injured ſaint!"

" My Dorville, ſpeak not thus: we meet,
" and all is forgotten."

" O Emily! ſoon, ſoon indeed it will be,
" and I ſhall be no more. Faſt ſinking to
" the grave you ſee your execrable Dorville;
" victim of guilt and barbarity. If yet thou
" canſt forgive me, ſpeak it, and thoſe ac-
" cents ſhall attend me to the grave, and
" chear my dying moments."

" Dorville, you have not offended me. Be-
" trayed by artifice againſt which your youth
" and inexperience could not guard, call not
" yourſelf guilty. Yet if it will be a conſolation
" to you in theſe hours of illneſs, hear that
" your Emily, your own Emily forgives you
" from her ſoul, as ſhe looks for forgiveneſs
" of her own errors at the throne of Hea-
" ven."

" Bleſs! bleſs you then!—Do not with-
" draw your hand, my Emily; theſe are the
" laſt moments of comfort I may ever know.

" Dear

" Dear hand! how many times delighted
" have I preſſed it, and ſighed for the hour
" when it ſhould make thee mine! Dear face!
" how often have I gazed upon it with fond-
" neſs!—'tis ſtill the ſame: mine, Emily,
" you hardly could have known; yet (for I
" know that heart) it will be dear to thee even
" in ruins; and when buried in the grave,
" you will love the duſt which covers it.
" Dear girl! how kind this is! O! canſt
" thou bear theſe poor parched lips to take
" one laſt—one parting kiſs?—

" I leaned towards him—and—holding out
" his feeble arms to receive me, he ſunk upon
" my boſom and expired.

" O! let your imagination paint my feel-
" ings, for words cannot.

" With difficulty was I torn from the
" breathleſs corſe. I kneeled by him—
" kiſſed his cold cheeks—and, at laſt, de-
" prived of ſenſe and life, was carried from
" the melancholy apartment. My maid con-
" ducted me home as ſoon as I was well
" enough to be moved, and M. Loverd re-
" mained behind to pay the laſt ſad debt to
" his remains.

" I ſet-

"I ſettled a penſion on each of the ſer-
"vants who had attended Dorville, and hav-
"ing diſpoſed of my houſe and furniture,
"and viſited and wept over his grave, retired
"hither, from a world which had no longer
"a ſingle bleſſing in ſtore for me.

"What became of Madame Dorville, or
"how ſhe bore the death her own barbarity
"had occaſioned, I have never heard; but I
"do not forget to pray for her—to pray that
"ſhe may repent her crimes and obtain for-
"giveneſs; and that in her laſt moments ſhe
"may find that conſolation ſhe neglected to
"give to him."

CHAP. VI.

SISTER Agnes had no ſooner finiſhed her melancholy recital, and received from Agatha, whoſe feeling heart took but too great a part in her ſufferings, every conſolation which compaſſion and the ſympathizing voice of friendſhip can beſtow, than accidentally looking behind her, ſhe ſaw a young man

man at ſome diſtance from them, "Mer-
"ciful Heaven!" exclaimed Siſter Agnes,
"look there!—" Agatha turned her head, and ſaw a youth of low ſtature, dreſſed in black, who, on their obſerving him, fled to hide himſelf among the trees.

"Were I not convinced of the reality," ſaid Agatha, "and had we not both ſeen
"him, I ſhould have believed it a dream;
"ſince by what means any one could enter
"here, or for what purpoſe is equally aſto-
"niſhing. But we ſeem to have little to
"apprehend, ſince he ſhuns us as much as
"we could him. It will be proper, how-
"ever, to make Madame St. Clermont im-
"mediately acquainted with the circum-
"ſtance."

They went to the houſe immediately, and informed the Lady Abbeſs of the perſon they had ſeen. Madame St. Clermont, equally aſtoniſhed and alarmed, requeſted every one to attend her, and adviſed that they ſhould proceed, without delay, to every part of the garden; and firſt, to that in which the young man had been diſcovered.

Agatha,

Agatha, beſides that the figure did not correſpond with his, was well aſſured that Hammond would never attempt to violate her ſanctuary; and ſhe had heard from Mrs. Herbert, that he was then in England. Mr. Ormiſtace, Mrs. Herbert had informed her, was then on the Continent, but where ſhe knew not; and from his romantic generoſity, ſhe would not have thought it wonderful, if, with a view to free her from a ſituation which ſhe knew he regarded with abhorrence, he ſhould have had temerity enough to have attempted ſuch a plan: but the low ſtature of the perſon again tranquilized her mind, and aſſured her that it could be no one that had even the remoteſt connection with her. As they proceeded along the grove, ſhe was, notwithſtanding, alarmed by obſerving the letters A. B. carved on a tree; but was again relieved by ſeeing, at a ſmall diſtance farther, the initials of Mademoiſelle de Vermueil engraven on another by the ſame hand.

After traverſing every part of the garden, and leaving not a ſpot unſearched, and after examining that the gates were faſt, they returned

turned to the houſe more aſtoniſhed than before; ſince, if any one had been there, they muſt have eſcaped by a miracle. The Lady Abbeſs obſerved, that it was abſolutely impoſſible for any one to climb over the wall; and that the locks of the gates were ſo conſtructed that no keys but her own could open them; which, except at the earneſt requeſt of Lady Belmont, when ſhe wiſhed to introduce her daughter by ſurprize to the beauties of the garden, had never been out of her poſſeſſion.

"It is, however a charming circumſtance," ſaid Siſter Frances: "for it is ſo long ſince "we have ſeen any thing but women, that the "novelty will be delightful. For my own "part, if I can but diſcover a tree that bears "any reſemblance to the figure of a man, I "am ready to worſhip it."

"Fie, Siſter Frances," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "this is certainly not a ſubject for "jeſting. Should it be rumoured abroad, "how much injury we ſhould ſuſtain."

"Then let us keep it ſecret," ſaid Siſter Frances; "which may very eaſily be done:

" I'll engage to be ſecret for one ; and this " little gentleman will make a charming va- " riety in our ſociety."

" It ſeems to me," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, with more anger than was uſual to her character, " that you have totally forgotten " your vows, Siſter Frances. Aſk Heaven to " forgive you converſation ſo unbecoming " the habit you wear."

" I have not indeed," ſaid Siſter Frances, " a very ſtrong predilection for my dreſs ; " and I muſt confeſs that the one I formerly " wore was infinitely more becoming, and " conſequently more agreeable to me. But " I would venture to lay any wager, that the " gentleman, whoever he is, would never " have come to the Convent had *I* not been " in it."

" Siſter Frances," returned Madame St. Clermont ; " muſt I again entreat your " ſilence. You muſt have much levity in " your diſpoſition, not to feel the conſe- " quences of ſuch an affair."

" We will keep *them* ſecret too, if you " pleaſe," replied Siſter Frances, in a half

whiſper, not daring to ſpeak aloud. Aſſuming courage again, however, in a few minutes ſhe continued: "But it ſtrikes me that this "adventure, inſtead of injuring our fame, "may, in the end, redound to our eternal "honour, for it will give us an opportunity, "like the nuns of ſome place, (I forget "where) of deſtroying our beauty to render "ourſelves objects of diſguſt to the invader. "I for one, will promiſe to ſet the example; "for I aſſure you faithfully, that, if ever he "comes again, I ſhall think it right to be "diſguiſed to the beſt of my power."

Madame St Clermont, though offended that what appeared to her and to every one elſe in ſo ſerious a light, ſhould be made a ſubject of ridicule by Siſter Frances, could not forbear ſmiling. After examining carefully every lock and door in the convent, the general terror began to ſubſide, and they attended Veſpers as uſual.

Several days now paſſed, and nothing more being ſeen or heard of the object of their alarm, it was generally believed in the convent, that it was a mere creature of

of the imaginations of Siſter Agnes and Siſter Conſtance; and had either of them ſeen him without the other, they would themſelves have thought the ſame; but they believed it impoſſible they could both be deceived.

As Agatha was walking with Siſter Frances one morning ſome time afterwards, Siſter Frances told her that believing her very diſcreet and prudent, ſhe thought her deſerving the confidence of one equally diſcreet; and ſhe therefore entreated her to keep a very important ſecret which ſhe was on the point of diſcloſing to her.

"I cannot, indeed, promiſe to keep the "ſecret," replied Agatha, "unleſs I know "its nature. You may perhaps have miſ-"chief in view to which I ſhould not chuſe to "be acceſſary.

"O! it is gone and paſt, and your divulg-"ing it can be of no ſervice. But ſomebody "I muſt reveal it to, or I ſhall die with the "pain of concealment; and I had rather "truſt to your prudence than to that of any "one elſe. You muſt know then, that I

" can inform you who the gentleman was
" that terrified you all."

" Good Heavens!"

" Nay you need not appeal to the Hea-
" vens,—they had nothing to do with it—
" he did not drop from the clouds. It
" was I."

" You?—"

" Yes, no creature beſide, upon my ho-
" nour; but I was wearied with the eternal
" ſameneſs of our life, and wiſhed to frighten
" you all for a little variety. And nothing
" could divert me more than the Lady Ab-
" beſs—poor ſoul! I believe ſhe thought he
" was come to run away with her. Now I am
" ſure if there had been ſuch a perſon, he
" would have taken you, or me, or half a
" hundred in preference to her. She is
" handſome enough, I confeſs, but then ſo
" formal and ſtately, that if I was a man I
" ſhould as ſoon think of falling in love with
" the picture of my great grandmother."

" And did you feel no compunction when
" you ſaw the uneaſineſs we all ſuffered?"

" Compunction! Why my dear creature, it

was

" was by far the happieſt day I have ſpent ſince
" I entered the convent. I enjoyed the pretty
" confuſion viſible in every face, and wanted
" nothing to complete my happineſs but to
" have been in reality what I pretended to
" be, for the ſake of perfecting your terror.
" But as you and Agnes were my particular
" friends, my ſcheme was particularly le-
" velled at you."

" We were greatly obliged to you."

" Yes, and for this reaſon, I carved your
" names upon the trees, and choſe to appear
" to you."

" But how could you poſſibly contrive——"

" O! I had one of the ſervants in my plot.
" She procured me the dreſs; and I went the
" ſhorteſt way back, and had taken it off,
" and was properly attired, before you return-
" ed to give the alarm."

" Certainly nature never intended you for a
" nun."

" Moſt certainly not; and nothing but
" my father's perverſe will could have made
" me one. But he fancied that I was not ſo
" handſome as my ſiſters, and therefore not

" ſo likely to marry to advantage; and the
" fortune, it ſeems, was not ſufficient for us
" all. But I aſſured him, with great force of
" argument, that if I had not ſuch regular
" features as they had, there was a certain
" vivacity in my air and converſation, which
" was infinitely more faſcinating. I aſſured
" him, that if I was not *touchante* I was *pi-*
" *quante*, which in a French woman is highly
" characteriſtic, and never fails of its effect.
" Not that my perſon could be found fault
" with neither—for, except my mouth being
" rather wide, and my noſe ſomewhat ex-
" ceeding the common ſize, my features
" themſelves were far from ugly; and then,
" I had, as you may perceive, a charming
" pair of black eyes, which I told him would
" do more execution in half an hour than the
" languiſhing blue ones of my ſiſters would
" in a twelvemonth. And I do aſſure you,
" that my complection, when ſet off with a
" little rouge, was then excellent for a French
" woman; but I have neglected it ſince I
" came here, and it is horribly tanned: but
" no wonder—when one's confeſſor is ſo old

and

" and ugly, it is not worth while to preſerve
" one's beauty. But all my arguments failed.
" The old gentleman was inexorable— and
" take the veil I muſt. Finding all my rea-
" ſonings fruitleſs, I attempted to work upon
" his feelings, which, I confeſs, would have
" been ungenerous in any other caſe, but was
" ſurely excuſable in this; and with my pa-
" thetic eloquence I intermingled a little flat-
" tery—the laſt reſource in a deſperate caſe.
" Conſider, my dear kind Sir," I ſaid, af-
" affecting to weep, " how terrible it will be
" for a young perſon like myſelf, to be ſhut
" out from the ſociety ſhe moſt likes—that
" of the ſex ſhe values for *your* ſake. Con-
" ſider too, that ſhe, who would glory to
" give to the world a ſon reſembling, in
" every reſpect, his beloved grandfather,—
" with that mild countenance, thoſe virtues
" which adorn you, would be placed where,
" (dreadful to think!) ſuch a hope would
" be impoſſible!" But this moving and very
" flattering addreſs had as little effect as what
" I had before urged; and it has always been
" my unfortunate fate, that where I expected

" to move tears, I have excited laughter.
" And ſo here I am, without any hope of
" tranſmitting to poſterity the image of my
" reſpectable papa."

" But it ſurprizes me," ſaid Agatha, " that,
" with the repugnance you had to the veil,
" your ſiſters could endure that, to promote
" their intereſt, you ſhould be ſacrificed.
" If they had leſs gaiety than you they were
" better calculated for a monaſtic life."

" O! with regard to that, my ſiſters were
" very fond of me, and loved me better than
" any body except themſelves; but we were
" none of us born with that heroic virtue,
" nor did we inherit it from the dear old
" gentleman, (notwithſtanding my flattering
" eulogiums) which is willing or deſirous to
" ſacrifice its own happineſs to that of others.
" They did not wiſh me to be a nun, nor I
" them; but ſince the evil muſt fall upon
" one of us, each was deſirous that one ſhould
" not be herſelf."

" Cruel policy!" ſaid Agatha, " which to
" aggrandize one part of the family ſacrifices
" another!"

" But

" But in truth," purſued Siſter Frances, " I never knew what it was to be unhappy; " and there is a kind of light-heartedneſs in " my diſpoſition which makes me ſport even " with misfortunes; chained to the oar, I " think I ſhould find ſome ſubject for laugh- " ter, or, if I found none, ſhould create it. " A ſolemn face always diverts me; and " when I am believed to be ſaying an Ave " Maria very devoutly, I am very likely ca- " ricaturing the Lady Abbeſs upon my nail."

" There is ſomething in Madame St. Cler- " mont," ſaid Agatha, " which mingled with " the affection her goodneſs inſpires, excites " ſuch a veneration that I am ſurprized ever " you can make her a ſubject of ridicule."

" O! I neither love nor eſteem her the " leſs becauſe I laugh at her. I have every " reaſon to love her; for ſhe left no ſtone " unturned to induce my father to give up " his horrid plan—and ſhe would not have " conſented to admit me, if ſhe had not " found that he was determined I ſhould go " to another convent if ſhe was unwilling to " receive me, and ſhe knew that it would be

" in her power to make my life happier here
" than elſewhere. Here, then, ſince it muſt
" be ſo, I came; and poor Mademoiſelle
" Henrietta Rouvine was converted into
" Siſter Frances, and became, for the reſt of
" her life, what neither nature, nor her own
" inclination intended her for—a nun. If it
" had not been for theſe excellent ſpirits, I
" muſt have died of the vapours; for needle-
" work is my averſion; books, except thoſe
" which are very diverting, I deteſt; and
" muſic is worſe than either. I had a maſter
" to teach me the harpſichord; but never
" being able to pay regard to more than one
" thing at a time, while I attended to the
" treble, I forgot the baſs—and while I at-
" tended to the baſs, I forgot the treble:
" and there ended that accompliſhment. I
" had then a drawing maſter; and I believe
" I might have excelled in drawing, but for
" an unfortunate, and, as ſome thought, miſ-
" placed inſtance of filial affection. I was
" painting the flight into Egypt, and in the
" face of the aſs caricatured my father. The
" likeneſs was ſo ſtrong that every one diſco-

" vered

" vered it. My father himſelf obſerved it,
" and was highly offended, notwithſtanding I
" aſſured him I really took his likeneſs from
" pure affection; and meant to deſtroy the
" reſt of the picture, and have that head ſet
" in a bracelet. The offence however was ſo
" great, that I was not permitted to have a
" maſter any-longer, which put an end to my
" only talent."

Thus did the lively Siſter Frances go on; ſporting with her own misfortunes, and happy from that very hilarity which ſeemed to make her unfit for the ſtation it enabled her to ſupport.

The happy period at length arrived, when Agatha was to enjoy a bleſſing to which ſhe had long looked forward with delight. A letter from Mrs. Herbert informed her, that ſhe would take the advantage of accompanying a family then preparing to viſit the ſouth of France; and would perſuade ſome of the party to attend her to Iſſoire.

Agatha counted the weeks and the days which were between the time of her receiving the welcome intelligence, and that in which

ſhe flattered herſelf her hopes would be realized. Happy! happy Agatha! ſhe would now ſay to herſelf, with that ſweet diſpoſition of mind which dwells on the bleſſings within our reach inſtead of repining at the want of thoſe beyond it, happy Agatha! to have found a friend whoſe attachment time and abſence have only ſerved to ſtrengthen, who flies to me with equal affection and delight! How ſweet will it be to preſs her to my boſom after this long, long ſeparation! to behold her a pleaſed ſpectator of the ſcenes, where, all my trials paſt, and my mind taught to be reſigned to its fate and chearful under it, I paſs my peaceful, happy life! no cares to interrupt the ſweet calm of every hour—Religion, as my beloved Madame St. Clermont once obſerved, not more my duty than delight. How ſweet will it be to introduce her to that dear friend! to bid two hearts, formed alike in the mould of virtue, give to each other the eſteem they merit! to the dear, unfortunate Agnes to introduce one formed to compaſſionate diſtreſs, and to love its victims!—Yes! Heaven only knows what

ſituation

ſituation will conduce to our happineſs. Perhaps, in the world I ſo reluctantly forſook, I might have found trials I wanted virtues to ſuſtain, or calamities which might have bowed me to the earth, and made me languiſh for the grave as the only aſylum from miſery. Here, ſecure from trial, and ſheltered from the ſtorms that wreck the peace of thouſands, I await, equally without dread or impatience, the diſſolution, for which it is the buſineſs of my life to prepare.

As Agatha was ſtraying alone one evening among the various beauties of the garden, and was contemplating with calm delight thoſe objects which ſhe had at firſt viewed with terror and agitation, Madame St. Clermont joined her, and entering into converſation with her uſual ſweetneſs, enquired how ſoon ſhe expected her friend Mrs. Herbert. Agatha replied that, calculating the time her journey muſt occupy, if ſhe ſet out at the time propoſed, there was reaſon to hope ſhe might arrive in leſs than a week.

"What would you ſay, my beloved Siſter, "if I were to aſſure you that I was apprized

of

" of the time of her arrival, and could give
" you certain information when you ſhould
" ſee her?"

" Happy, happy tidings!" ſaid Agatha, her eyes ſparkling, and her whole countenance animated with pleaſure, " And how—
" when?—My dear Madame St. Clermont
" do not keep me in ſuſpenſe."

" Let me then ſee you more tranquil, and
" I will tell you every thing. What would
" yot think if ſhe were now at Iſſoire?"

" At Iſſoire! O! happineſs not to be ex-
" preſt!—In a few dear hours I ſhall ſee
" her——"

" Yes—in leſs than even that time; in a
" few minutes. She is now in the parlour.
" She wiſhed to meet you by ſurprize, and to
" give you the pleaſure of ſeeing her unex-
" pectedly; but I, who know you better, my
" ſweet ſiſter, knew how little able you are,
" even now, to ſupport ſuch an agitation of
" ſpirits as the unexpected ſight of a friend
" ſo dear would occaſion, and without diffi-
" culty have prevailed upon her to ſuffer me
" to give you notice of her arrival."

" Kind!

" Kind! dear Madame St. Clermont! how " ſhall I ever return the thouſand, thouſand " marks of tenderneſs and friendſhip I have " received from you!—Of what materials " muſt this heart be compoſed, if I did not " feel and acknowledge myſelf happy—if I " could repine at the privation of the few " pleaſures I am forbidden to deſire, when " ſo many, many others have fallen to my " lot?"

As Agatha approached the houſe, her impatience to ſee Mrs. Herbert made her attempt to quicken her pace; but her tottering limbs refuſed their office, and ſhe was obliged to ſtop, and lean on Madame St. Clermont, while ſhe endeavoured to quiet her agitated ſpirits.

" However our rules forbid it, my dear " ſiſter," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " it is " my requeſt that you will join Mrs. Her- " bert in the parlour. It is in my power " occaſionally to diſpenſe with forms, and it " were cruel indeed to exact their obſervance " on ſuch an occaſion as the preſent; eſpe-

" cially,

" cially, as Mrs. Herbert is alone, and there " will be no gentleman preſent *."

As Agatha entered the parlour, Mrs. Herbert met her with every expreſſion of the tendereſt affection; yet her ſenſations, which were thoſe of mingled pleaſure and pain, of joy at meeting one ſhe tenderly loved, and of ſorrow at meeting her thus loſt to the world, rendered her words ſcarcely audible. Agatha wept, and preſſed her to her heart with all the friendſhip and tenderneſs that heart dictated.

When the firſt emotions of pleaſure were over, Madame St. Clermont ſeeing Agatha's ſpirits ſo tranquil as to ſtand in no need of her friendly exertions, left the room; imagining that her preſence might be ſome reſtraint, ſince, though ſhe had been long a friend to Agatha, ſhe was yet a ſtranger to Mrs. Herbert.

With much heſitation, yet with a countenance expreſſing the tendereſt ſolicitude, Mrs.

* It is well known that in all convents there is a threſhold over which the nuns ought not to paſs when viſited by ſtrangers.

Herbert

Herbert now ſaid to Agatha, " I almoſt fear " to pain my beloved friend by the enquiry, " yet it would be the ſweeteſt ſatisfaction to " me to know, to be aſſured from her own " lips, that ſhe is indeed happy: or if, alas! " otherwiſe, I ſhould yet find a conſolation " in the hope that the ſoothing voice of " friendſhip might leſſen her pain. May I " then aſk—or will you think me imperti- " nently inquiſitive?"

" With gratitude greater than I can ex- " preſs," replied Agatha, " do I witneſs " your generous anxiety for my happineſs. " Yes, my deareſt Mrs. Herbert, you have " no cauſe for apprehenſion; believe me " when I aſſure you, with a ſincerity I ſhould " be hurt if you could miſtruſt, that *I am* " *happy*. Many and ſevere were the ſtrug- " gles my mind underwent——ſtruggles " which had well nigh overpowered a " conſtitution not naturally ſtrong. But a " ſincere and fervent deſire to purſue what I " believed to be my duty, ſupported me un- " der every ſuffering, healed every wound, " and at laſt converted what I had deemed " miſery into a ſtate of happineſs as great as

" I can or ought to desire in a world where I
" am but a creature of a day: and this ex-
" cellent lesson has been taught me, which I
" seek by every means in my power to teach
" to others—*that to a mind sincerely disposed*
" *to perform them, the severest duties be-*
" *come, by degrees, supportable, and even*
" *sweet.* The cup of pleasure, to those who
" drink deeply of its delicious draughts,
" leaves a bitter on the palate which they
" vainly seek to lose; while, at the pure
" fountain of virtue and duty, the more co-
" pious the draught, the more delicious the
" beverage: the bitter dregs of disappoint-
" ment mingle not with its uncontaminated
" waters—which flow for ever sweet, for ever
" pure.—Yet I am not shut out from plea-
" sure here—from pleasure of the purest kind.
" I *had* painted to myself a little Heaven of
" happiness in the sweet idea of being one
" day called by the endearing name of mo-
" ther; of seeing around me a little group
" of smiling faces—infants who owed to me
" much more than life—happiness and vir-
" tue!—I figured to myself their filial ten-

" derness,

" derneſs. I ſaw myſelf in the days of age
" and decrepitude the object of their cares: I
" ſaw the anxiety with which they would
" haſten to ſupport my tottering ſteps, and
" ſweeten exiſtence on the verge of its decay.
" O! Mrs. Herbert! theſe, and a thouſand
" other delightful pictures had my fond ima-
" gination drawn; but, forced to relinquiſh
" them, others appeared on the canvaſs, the
" colours of which, though leſs glowing at
" firſt, are more durable, and become more
" and more beautiful as they are mellowed by
" the hand of time. Death might have rob-
" bed me of thoſe children, or, more terri-
" ble yet! of their father: I might have fol-
" lowed them to the grave, where my peace
" ſhould have been entombed with their duſt;
" —or I might have ſeen them, in ſpite of
" the principles I had laboured to inculcate,
" abandon their duty, and thus bring my
" grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave. Even
" here I am bleſt with children, who, if
" it pleaſe Heaven to rob me of them, will
" coſt me no tears but thoſe of humanity and
" mild regret. The poor, the ſick, and the

" unhappy

" unhappy are my children; and on them do
" I beſtow that tenderneſs, thoſe duties which
" had elſe been laviſhed on my own; and, if
" leſs dear to me individually, collectively
" they are not. Then in the ſociety of Ma-
" dame St. Clermont and of Siſter Agnes,
" whom I have repeatedly mentioned to you,
" and whom I ſhall delight to introduce to
" your regard, I find a pleaſure as ſweet as
" it is pure."

Mrs. Herbert liſtened with tears of affection and admiration, and when Agatha ceaſed ſpeaking, expreſſed the delight ſhe felt at ſeeing her happy. She ſaid, that Madame St. Clermont's appearance and manner, with the affection ſhe diſcovered for Agatha, had given her a pleaſure as unexpected as it was welcome, ſince, notwithſtanding the high encomiums ſhe had beſtowed upon her in her letters, ſhe could not help imagining a Lady Abbeſs ſuch as fancy commonly pictures her, ceremonious and auſtere, with the words lock and key written on her countenance. " But pray, my dear," purſued Mrs. Herbert with her natural vivacity, " is your prieſt

" as

" as handſome and intereſting as your Lady
" Abbeſs? If that be the caſe, I ſhall think
" the ſituation of his flock leſs ſafe than plea-
" ſant."

Agatha ſmiled, and aſſured her that his age and venerable appearance were ſhe to ſee him, would at once deſtroy every idea of the kind. " But he is," continued Agatha, " an epi-
" tome of every thing that is valuable
" and excellent; and we look up to him as
" to a father and guide. In his countenance
" and his benignant ſmile, he often reminds
" me of Mr. Crawford; but perhaps there is
" a reſemblance in the truly good of every
" country and religion; the ſame benevolent
" ſentiments fill their minds, and thus become
" imprinted on the face."

Agatha now enquired with an agitation ſhe had hoped never again to feel, concerning Hammond. " Speak, Mrs. Herbert," ſhe ſaid, " and remove the only weight which
" now ever lodges at my heart, is he well?—
" is he happy?——"

" His health," replied Mrs. Herbert, " is
" perfectly re-eſtabliſhed. I will not deceive

" you

" you by ſaying he is happy, for there is a de-
" jection on his countenance at times which
" ſhews that all is not right within; but his
" ſpirits are, on the whole, infinitely better
" than they were. He does not ſhun ſociety,
" but makes a part in it, ſometimes with ap-
" parent chearfulneſs, but always with polite
" complacency. When I broke to him the
" fatal tidings of your ſituation——"

" Huſh," interrupted Agatha, " I muſt
" not hear you—I could not bear the dread-
" ful detail of his ſufferings. I bleſs Heaven
" that he is ſo tranquil; and it is my fervent
" and daily prayer that he may be one day
" not only peaceful but happy. Aſſure him,
" Mrs Herbert, if you think it will be any
" comfort to him, that I wiſh and pray for his
" happineſs; yet, if you think the mention
" of my name may revive any dangerous re-
" membrance, withhold it entirely. And
" now we will cloſe this ſubject—cloſe it for
" ever!" ſaid ſhe ſighing deeply. Then making an effort to ſuppreſs feelings which the ſight of Mrs. Herbert and her converſation had for a moment renewed, ſhe aſſumed immediately

immediately her natural ſerenity, and ſpoke of other ſubjects with chearfulneſs and compoſure.

Madame St. Clermont ſoon after joined them; and Agatha, calling both of them her friends, entreated them for her ſake to be ſuch to each other. She then introduced Siſter Agnes and the lively Siſter Frances to Mrs. Herbert, who, having been at the convent nearly two hours was preparing to depart, when a meſſage arrived from Lady Belmont requeſting Mrs. Herbert's company and that of the gentleman who was with her, at her houſe during her ſtay at Iſſoire. Agatha's pleaſure at this politeneſs to her friend is not to be deſcribed; and ſhe felt more than ever grateful for being bleſt with parents who foreſaw and prevented every wiſh of her heart.

Mrs. Herbert informed Agatha, that the gentleman who accompanied her was Mr. Harold Crawford, a youth of about nineteen, and the eldeſt ſon of Mr. Crawford, who with her had joined the family of Mr. Mellorane on their journey to the South of France

for the health of the latter. Mrs. Herbert then aſked Madame St. Clermont if Mr. Crawford might be permitted to attend her on her next viſit to the convent; to which Madame St. Clermont chearfully conſented, but entreated Mrs. Herbert to excuſe her if the rules ſhe had diſpenſed with on her account were obſerved in the preſence of another; ſince ſhe might be ſeverely cenſured if the nuns committed to her charge joined the gueſts in the parlour, which formed no part of the convent.

Mrs. Herbert now took leave of Agatha, promiſing to return the next morning.

As the next day happened to be one of thoſe appointed for the ſick and poor to viſit her grate, and receive medicines, advice, and cloathing, Agatha without aſſigning her reaſons, entreated Mrs. Herbert to come to her immediately after the ſervice of Sexte, (that performed at noon) knowing that her poor penſioners would all be diſmiſſed before that time.

Mrs. Herbert, who imagined there muſt be ſome reaſon for delaying till paſt twelve, a viſit

viſit which ſhe was aſſured Agatha deſired as impatiently as herſelf, enquired, and very ſoon diſcovered the reaſon. Determined, therefore, to ſee her by ſurprize the ſecond time, though the Lady Abbeſs's prudence had forbidden it the firſt, ſhe aſked and obtained Lady Belmont's permiſſion to go to the convent, attended by Mr. Crawford, at ten o'clock inſtead of one.

CHAP. VII.

WHEN they arrived, they found Agatha diſpenſing benefits to more than twenty perſons of different ages and deſcriptions; while her countenance, illuminated by benevolence, beſpoke her what ſhe had been ſo often and ſo juſtly called—the Angel of Auvergne!

"The beſt bleſſings of Heaven light on "you, Madam!" an aged venerable woman was ſaying to Agatha, as they entered, "You "have ſaved the life of my ſon, the only "ſupport of his family. O! could my poor

"'huſband look down from Heaven, how
" would he bleſs you for ſaving us all! Jean-
" not can work now, Madam, and is as
" healthy as ever; and to you he owes
" it."

" I rejoice to hear of his recovery," ſaid Agatha; " yet to God not to me the praiſe
" is due: the medicines I have been ſo for-
" tunate as to give you owed their efficacy to
" *his* bleſſings who delights to protect the
" good and induſtrious."

Some children now advanced to liſp their gratitude, and received, with the cloaths ſhe had provided for them, leſſons of piety and virtue.

Agatha, intently engaged in her works of charity, did not ſee Mrs. Herbert and Mr. Crawford as they entered. When ſhe diſcovered them ſhe coloured and felt confuſed; but recollecting herſelf—recollecting that ſhe had indeed no cauſe for ſhame while performing acts of virtue, ſhe purſued her benevolent taſk till all were ſerved, and departed, loading her with bleſſings and grateful acknowledgements, which ſhe in vain endea-

voured to ſilence, by fixing the gratitude where ſhe believed it due—on Him whoſe ſteward and almoner ſhe conſidered herſelf.

Mr. Harold Crawford poſſeſſed all the goodneſs of heart, and ſweetneſs of diſpoſition of his father, with all that openneſs, candour, and generoſity, which are the loveliеſt characteriſtics of youth. On his very handſome face, and regular but manly features, mildneſs and ſerenity were moſt plainly written, but blended with that noble ingenuouſneſs which beſpoke him incapable of performing a mean or illiberal action. Though polite to all, his politeneſs to his parents and ſiſters had been always moſt conſpicuous; and if he ever *was* deficient in attention, it was not to *them*. Senſibility was not generally eſteemed the leading feature in his character; yet he rather concealed than was wanting in it—and perhaps this was the only part of his conduct which borrowed the diſguiſe of art: but aſhamed to diſcover that feeling which he had taught himſelf to ſuppoſe was derogatory to the dignity of a man, he

never owned himſelf affected by diſtreſs, though his actions, and his impatience to relieve it, conſtantly betrayed that he was ſo.

Deeply intereſted and affected by the ſcene before him, he could ſcarcely conceal his tears. He ſhook his head in order as it were to force them back again; and, as he blew his noſe, affected to cough at the ſame time. Fancying the Lady Abbeſs had remarked his tears, and might impute them to their real cauſe, as ſoon as the poor viſitants were departed, he complained of having caught a cold. Madame St. Clermont remarked that it was a diſorder very common to the Engliſh.

"And particularly ſo to Mr. Crawford," ſaid Mrs. Herbert; "he is ſure to take cold "immediately on beholding an object of diſ-"treſs; or witneſſing an act of generoſi-"ty."

"Indeed Mrs. Herbert," ſaid he colouring, "you are very much miſtaken."

"You are conſcious that I am not," returned Mrs. Herbert; "and you had better "avoid

" avoid an argument in which you know I
" always come off victorious. I have told
" you a thouſand times, and I will repeat it
" to your utter confuſion in this company,
" that you are not deſtitute of feeling. But
" obſerve, that, when I ſay this, I neither
" mean to praiſe nor condemn you. I never
" imagined ſenſibility a virtue in itſelf. It
" is a gift of nature, which, though it may
" render even *you* more intereſting than you
" would be without it, as it is not of our
" own creating, cannot have the name, or
" deſerve the reward of moral virtue. It of-
" ten, indeed, prompts noble and generous
" actions; but a perſon who, without being
" impelled to thoſe actions by his own feel-
" ings, ſhould perform them becauſe he be-
" lieved duty, humanity, and religion requir-
" ed it, would be quite as meritorious as one
" who performed them to gratify the propen-
" ſities of his nature which would hardly
" permit him to act otherwiſe. But I
" will not torment you longer with this
" ſubject."

Mrs. Herbert then informed Madame St.

Clermont and Agatha, that when Mr. Mellorane was perfectly recovered, his family were to travel northward through France, and were to visit Paris in their way, where Mr. Ormistace was to meet them, to enjoy with them the sublime spectacle of a King giving liberty to his Subjects—a King, whose humanity, and desire to make them happy entitled him to the adoration of his people.

"I have but one fear," continued Mrs. Herbert looking at Mr. Crawford, "and that is—
"that some people will have very bad colds
"on the occasion."

"God grant," said Madame St. Clermont,
"that my countrymen may make a good use
"of the liberty their Monarch has so gene-
"rously given them."

"I hope there is no doubt of it," said Mrs. Herbert.

"I hope not," rejoined Madame St. Clermont. "If I can judge of the dispositions
"of the nation in general, by those of the
"Nobles, they certainly will not. They
"are liberal-minded, benevolent, and hu-
"mane, and make the most temperate use

"of

" of the power given them over their vaſſals
" and dependents. Of the diſpoſition of the
" lower claſs it is impoſſible to judge; but
" in a ſtate of ſubjection they are mild and
" gentle-ſpirited, humble to their ſuperiors,
" and courteous to their equals, with whom
" they lead a life, happy, gay, and thought-
" leſs to a proverb."

" Your remark is certainly juſt," ſaid Mrs. Herbert; " It is impoſſible to judge " of the real diſpoſition of one who has " never been endued with power to exert " it; and thoſe who when ruled have been " mild and docile, frequently become when " they are rulers untractable and tyrannical. " But if the French ſhould acquire a ſpirit " of *tyranny* with their *freedom*, if they ſhould " not only kick down but trample upon the " ladder by which they riſe, they will have " reaſon, perhaps, as well in this world as " the next, to wiſh they had been vaſſals " ſtill."

" It is certain," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " that the power given to the Nobles of our " country over the peaſantry, however tempe-

" rately they have uſed it of late years, is ſuch
" as no one, for the honour of human nature,
" ought to have it in his power to exert over
" another; and I have often looked with envy
" towards *your* country, where the ſame laws
" protect the perſon and property of the pea-
" ſant as the lord, and where every ſubject
" enjoys as perfect liberty, as in a world
" where abſolute perfection is unattainable,
" it is poſſible to do, conſiſtent with his
" happineſs and ſafety. You may ſmile in-
" wardly, perhaps, at *my* ſpeaking of free-
" dom, and think it reſembles the well known
" ſtory of a priſoner confined for debt in
" England, who exclaimed, when the nation
" was in dread of a French Invaſion, 'My
' dear friends what will become of our liber-
' ty?'—But I certainly cannot wiſh, though
" I impoſe reſtraints upon myſelf voluntа-
" rily, that others, which are unjuſt, ſhould
" be impoſed upon my countrymen *in*volun-
" tarily.—To return to what I was ſaying in
" praiſe of our Nobles: During the dreadful
" ſtorm which laid waſte ſeveral leagues of
" our moſt fertile provinces laſt year, every

" exertion

" exertion that humanity could deviſe was " employed by them to repair the loſſes their " tenantry had ſuſtained. Beſides affording " them immediate and ample ſupport, they " remitted them a year's rent, and purchaſed " ſeed to ſow the land the year enſuing. The " King ſent more than a million of livres to " the ſufferers, and remitted them a year's " taxes."

" The generous hearts of Engliſhmen " would hardly have prompted them to do " more," ſaid Mr. Crawford; " and they " would not, I am ſure, have done leſs."

After ſome farther converſation on this and other ſubjects, Mrs. Herbert again took leave of Agatha till the afternoon, when ſhe promiſed to return and paſs ſome hours with her.

Mrs Herbert and Mr. Crawford remained ſix weeks at Lady Belmont's, who took a pleaſure in paying every poſſible attention to her gueſts, when, Mr. Mellorane's health being perfectly re-eſtabliſhed, they ſet out to meet his family on their way to Paris. Lady Belmont requeſted Mrs. Herbert to pay her

a yearly viſit, and ſhe promiſed to profit by her kindneſs whenever it was in her power. This hope ſoftened the pangs of ſeparation; yet ſtill they were ſevere—and all Agatha's own fortitude, and Madame St. Clermont's kind attentions, with thoſe of Lady Belmont were neceſſary to enable her to bear the ſeparation from her friend. Time, however, together with the hope of meeting again before *very* long, reſtored her former ſerenity.

The next year paſſed the ſame as the two which preceded it—Agatha, in the duties of Religion, Charity, and Friendſhip, ſtill enjoying 'that peace which the world cannot give.' The ſweet talent of poetry which had early formed one of her amuſements was not neglected; and her verſes ſometimes claimed and obtained the prize among thoſe which were conſigned to the vaſe, but oftener were the amuſement of her ſolitary hours. The following is ſelected from among others which ſhe wrote about this period to paſs away ſome minutes not claimed by more important buſineſs.

TO

TO TRANQUILITY.

Dear ſmiling ſource of ev'ry laſting joy!
Still o'er my boſom hold thy gentle ſway,
Still give the peace that knows no rude alloy,
Still ev'ry hour in thy white robes array.

Far from the wearying world thy ſpirit flies,
To where the Veſtal breathes her ſilent prayer,
There thy mild accents court her to the ſkies,
And bid her ſeek thy richeſt bleſſings There.

Thy modeſt beauties fly from vulgar ſight,
To ſcenes where Contemplation loves to rove,
While the mild moon emits her azure light,
O'er the ſtill lake, or gently-waving grove.

Dear ſmiling Spirit! ſtill theſe haunts pervade,
Soothe ev'ry breaſt with thy benignant power,
Nor, like theſe flowers which only bloom to fade,
Live but the bleſſing of a fleeting hour.

Mrs. Herbert wrote to Agatha regularly, but not being able to find among her acquaintance any one who had thoughts of going to France, and her uncle, who would with plea-

ſure have accompanied her, having buſineſs which called him elſewhere, ſhe was obliged, however reluctantly, to relinquiſh the hope of viſiting Iſſoire the year after ſhe left it; from the next ſhe hoped for better fortune. But the next year that ſpirit of tumult, which had long been fermenting, exceeded all bounds, and rendered travelling in France equally unpleaſant and dangerous. To the pain of the deprivation of her friend's ſociety was added the fear which Agatha, in common with almoſt every one elſe, felt on the alarming ſituation of public affairs. Property, and the life of any one who had the misfortune to poſſeſs it, was no longer held ſacred. Rapine, maſſacre, and bloodſhed were common throughout the kingdom. The King, who had made his ſubjects free, was himſelf a priſoner. His friends and adherents were murdered; and inſtead of the liberty of opinion ſo long and ſo ardently deſired, inſtead of the ſpirit of toleration which the lenient meaſures of the preſent reign had ſanctioned and promoted, every one dreaded to avow his ſentiments if they were in oppoſition to thoſe of the ruling

ling faction, or, were he hardy enough to avow them, found death the conſequence of his temerity. The monks and nuns in the convents near Paris, received at firſt permiſſion, and afterwards commands to quit their ſanctuaries. Some few who, contrary to their wiſhes or inclinations had taken the cowl or the veil, and who yet languiſhed for the world they had quitted, received the ſummons with pleaſure; but by far the greater number, however reluctantly they might at firſt have quitted ſociety, having now no proviſion out of their convent, and moſt of their friends and connections being either dead, diſperſed or fled, left their aſylum with regret and dread.

A rumour at length was ſpread at Iſſoire, that the convent there, which, on account of the riches of many of thoſe profeſſed in it, had long been beheld with envy by thoſe whoſe ideas of liberty conſiſted in appropriating to themſelves the property of others, would not long be ſuffered to remain inviolate. Siſter Frances on the firſt mention of this, acknowledged that the idea gave her infinite pleaſure. "O my deareſt Conſtance!" ſhe exclaimed,

exclaimed, " I ſhall, I ſhall after all, perpe-
" tuate my dear father's image and his vir-
" tues. And how ſhall I glory in convin-
" cing him that I can marry better than either
" of my ſiſters! Yes—the ſprightly Mademoi-
" ſelle Henrietta will eclipſe them both,
" and break the hearts of half the men ſhe
" ſees."

" For Heaven's ſake," ſaid Agatha, " do
" not talk thus: Though convinced that your
" volatile ſpirits only occaſion it, and that your
" principles are really good, ſuch converſation
" muſt appear to me and to every one equally
" ill-timed and improper. Remember your
" vows."

" Yes, that I have long done to my ſorrow.
" But I am ſerious upon my honour. I will
" try at leaſt, what conqueſts I can make,
" if I ſhould be ſet at liberty. My hair is
" grown long enough for dreſſing—I only
" repent that I have not been rather more
" careful of my complection—But who
" could have foreſeen what has happened?"

" And can you then indeed," ſaid Agatha,
" contemplate without dread the breach of
" vows ſo ſolemn?"

" Moſt

" Moſt certainly I can—For my poor fa-
" ther indeed, I ſhall feel a few apprehen-
" ſions; for I recollect picking up a charm-
" ing book in his library—it was in Engliſh,
" but worth all the French ones I ever met
" with—I forget the title—but four of the
" lines I remember were,

He that impoſes an oath, makes it,
Not he who for convenience takes it.
Then how can any one be ſaid,
To break an oath he never made.

" Now, this being the caſe, the breach of
" vows will be my father's, and I ſhall have
" no conſequences to apprehend—and for
" impoſing them upon me he is entitled to
" ſome puniſhment."

But however lightly ſiſter Frances treated the ſubject, it became very ſoon a ſerious cauſe of alarm to Agatha and to every one elſe in the convent. The terror of Siſter Frances became at length even more evident than that of the reſt; for light and inconſiderate minds are often moſt deeply impreſſed by fear when they are brought to feel it.

Though determined not to quit the convent till

till compelled to it, almoſt every one endeavoured to provide for her ſafety and ſupport, in caſe neceſſity ſhould force her to return to the world. Thoſe who had relations or friends wrote to requeſt their protection; others, whom death or accident had robbed of this reſource, ſtrove to deviſe ſome means of maintenance, and hoped to earn a ſubſiſtence by their needle or pencil; while ſome, whom age and ill-health had enfeebled, and whoſe minds, long unaccuſtomed to ſtruggle with hardſhips, had loſt in this peaceful retreat their natural activity, ſhrunk from the impending evil with dread and horror: to them their country was worſe than a deſert; ſince it left them not only nothing to hope, but every thing to fear: Religion, and all who profeſſed it, were branded with infamy; and the habit of ſanctity was become the ſignal for inſult—perhaps deſtruction.

It was determined that whenever the fatal period ſhould arrive, Agatha ſhould return to her parents, and with them proceed immediately to England. Siſter Agnes, whom, on account of her friendſhip for Agatha, Lady

Belmont

Belmont conſidered as a ſecond child, was to accompany them, and was entreated to regard their houſe as her home in future. To Madame St. Clermont Lady Belmont made an offer of her houſe and protection; but ſhe had relations in Spain who had ſtrongly urged her return to them, and therefore declined accepting the offer, though with the moſt grateful acknowledgements.

After having determined what ſteps to purſue, every one continued her duties of devotion as before, and awaited with fearful expectation the event too certainly foreſeen. Some months, however, paſſed, and no new report having reached them, and the country around being in a ſtate of tolerable tranquility, their fears began, in ſome meaſure, to ſubſide; and Agatha was beginning once more to indulge the hope that ſhe ſhould be ſuffered to remain in a retreat which duty and habit had equally endeared to her, when a new and far more dreadful cauſe of apprehenſion and terror made her regardleſs of every other, and careleſs of every evil that might befal herſelf. The lives of her parents were threatened.

Their

Their immenſe property, known by the ſums they beſtowed in charity, was intended to be ſeized; and from one of thoſe falſe accuſations which have been ſo often ingeniouſly fabricated in France, their lives were ſaid to be forfeit. The intelligence reached them by means of a faithful ſervant who had heard it whiſpered among the peaſantry in a neighbouring village. Their only chance of ſafety was flight; but as they learned that the *Officers* of *Juſtice* were not expected till the week following, they believed they might allow themſelves time to ſecure ſome of their moſt valuable articles before their departure. The fatal intelligence reached them early in the evening, and they determined to ſet out during the following night, intending to employ that night and the next day in the moſt ſecret though expeditious preparations. Agatha, dearer to them both than the lives which for her ſake they were anxious to preſerve, they could not endure to leave behind them in a country and ſituation, where, if ſhe was for the preſent ſcreened from danger, her ſafety was precarious, and every day might expoſe her

her to inſults and miſery they ſhuddered to contemplate. After conſulting with Madame St. Clermont, it was therefore agreed, that Agatha, with Siſter Agnes, ſhould come to them immediately after Matins, under the guidance and protection of the venerable confeſſor; and that, under cover of the night, on horſeback, and in the diſguiſe of peaſants, they ſhould travel as faſt as poſſible towards the ſouthern coaſt, and from thence embark for England by the firſt opportunity. They wiſhed to have taken Agatha with them immediately, but believing that it might excite a ſuſpicion of their intentions, they judged it moſt prudent that ſhe ſhould remain at the convent till the moment of their flight.

Their plan being arranged, and every thing determined upon, they left the convent ſoon after Veſpers. Agatha, a prey to extreme terror, could ſcarcely endure to part from them, though ſo ſoon to be reſtored to them for ever. She clung to Lady Belmont, wept on her boſom, and when the neceſſity of their quitting her to haſten the preparations for their departure was urged, ſhe ſeemed to

awake

awake as from a dream, and with wildneſs in her countenance, conjured them to go—to loſe not a moment; while her imagination, anticipating the horrors which awaited them in caſe of delay, almoſt deprived her of reaſon. With anguiſh not leſs than her own, they tore themſelves from her; and imploring Heaven to bleſs her, and preſerve their lives for her ſake, left her almoſt lifeleſs in the arms of Madame St. Clermont.

When her parents had left her, Madame St. Clermont endeavoured by every means in her power to calm Agatha's fears, and to reſtore her to reaſon. She urged the neceſſity of her aſſuming fortitude on the dreadful occaſion; ſince if, by giving way to the agitation of her mind, ſhe ſhould ſuffer in her health, her illneſs might impede their journey, and occaſion the miſery ſhe dreaded. She aſſured her that ſhe had little cauſe for apprehenſion, ſince, as their flight was not ſuſpected, there was little danger of its being prevented; and ſhe conjured her in the tendereſt manner, if not for her own ſake, for that of her parents, to endeavour to moderate her fears.

Soothed

Soothed by her tenderneſs, and convinced by her reaſonings, Agatha became more compoſed, and proceeded to prepare with Siſter Agnes the diſguiſes neceſſary for them both. Some of the cloaths which had been intended for her poor penſioners, when they had undergone a trifling alteration could be worn by them both; and employed in this taſk, Agatha had not been in bed when the bell called her to Matins.

Ah! ſhe ſaid, tomorrow night at this hour, ſhall I fly to my parents!—tomorrow night—Gracious Heaven! ſhield and preſerve them! Once more then—and once more only ſhall I hear this ſolemn ſound—once more only ſhall it call me at this hour to do homage to my Creator. Tomorrow night I quit this cell—quit it for ever!

She now lit her taper, and with trembling ſteps traverſed the gallery that led to the chapel. The bell yet tolled, and few of the nuns were aſſembled. Agatha proceeded to the place where ſhe uſually performed her devotions, and kneeling down, was engaged in ſilent prayer, when a noiſe in the outer body of the church ſtartled and alarmed her. The chapel in which

which the nuns aſſembled was ſeparated from the church itſelf by two grated folding doors of iron. The noiſe, which had been heard by the other nuns who were preſent as well as Agatha, had alarmed them all; but having ceaſed, they were preparing to begin the ſervice, when they heard it again, and louder than before, and could diſtinguiſh that it was made by ſome one ſtriking one of the windows, the glaſs of which they heard fall, and immediately after a man's voice pronounced, which the vaulted roof conveyed to them in a deep and hollow tone, the name of Agatha. Madame St. Clermont now approached Agatha, whoſe terror had almoſt deprived her of life, and propoſed that they ſhould unlock the iron doors, and go towards the window whence the voice proceeded, ſince it was probable, ſhe thought, that it might be a meſſenger from Lady Belmont, who might have ſomething of moment to communicate to her daughter, which would not admit of delay. She therefore gave the keys to one of the nuns, and ſupporting Agatha, and followed by the other nuns, proceeded towards the window. The

noiſe

noiſe had ceaſed, but they obſerved ſomething white on the ground under the window, a pane of which lay ſhattered on the pavement. On approaching nearer, they diſcovered it to be a paper. Madame St. Clermont took it up, and found it was tied to a ſmall box, with the word Agatha written upon it with a pencil. She gave it to Agatha, whoſe hand trembled too violently to open the paper without her aſſiſtance. It contained theſe words:

"My Agatha—God preſerve thee!—We are beſet—Every avenue filled with armed men—we try to eſcape, Heaven knows whither!—But a private paſſage—we cannot fly to thee, the murderers are between us—If we live you ſhall hear from us—God preſerve thee!——"

Of the box, which contained ſome jewels, one of the nuns took charge, while the others ſupported and endeavoured to recover Agatha, who had fainted before ſhe finiſhed reading the dreadful billet. They carried her to the parlour and uſed every means to reſtore her,

her, but without effect for a conſiderable time; and when at laſt ſhe recovered her ſenſes and ſpeech, it was only to feel and expreſs an agony, which not all the ſoothing tenderneſs of Madame St. Clermont or of the weeping Siſter Agnes, could alleviate for a moment. She paſſed a night of horror and miſery not to be deſcribed.

Early in the morning the holy father arrived, and brought the bleſt aſſurance, that Sir Charles and Lady Belmont had eluded the vigilance of thoſe who came to ſecure them, and had fled, no one knew whither. Agatha returned thanks to Heaven; and for ſome time, in the joy of hearing they had eſcaped, forgot the dangers which yet threatened them.

More than a week now paſſed, and Agatha having received repeated aſſurances that they were not taken, began to hope they were paſt danger, and perhaps out of the kingdom, when one evening a poor girl came to the convent and aſked to ſpeak with her, at the ſame time ſaying, that ſhe brought a letter which ſhe was to deliver into no hands but hers. Agatha, attended by Madame St. Cler-

mont, went to her in the parlour, and the girl gave her a ſealed letter, written in Engliſh, but without any ſuperſcription. The hand writing was Lady Belmont's, but it had no ſignature. The contents were as follows:

"My Beloved Child—

"We are ſafe at preſent, and wait for you. The bearer of this will conduct you and Siſter A—— to us. Change your habits, and travel as little as poſſible by day. You will be told what it is not ſafe to write."

Agatha, in extreme agitation, enquired who had brought the letter. The girl replied, that it was a man who had fallen ſick, and now lay at her father's cottage, where he had been three days: that his illneſs appeared to be occaſioned by the fatigue of travelling, and they did not now think he would recover: that he was of the ſame opinion himſelf, and had promiſed her all the money he ſhould have about him when he died, and had given her ſome already, in caſe ſhe would take that letter to the convent, and give it into the hands of one of the nuns named Siſter Con-

ſtance, and would promiſe him faithfully never to ſpeak of it to any one. Agatha enquired where ſhe lived, and learned that it was at a village about two leagues diſtant. She enquired with equal anxiety and concern, if the perſon had had no medicine or attendance. The girl ſaid, that till that day he had had nothing but ſuch things as her mother could give him; for that though they believed he had a good deal of money about him, he had ſeemed very ſparing of it; but that now, thinking himſelf in danger, he had conſented to have a doctor, and he had ordered him ſomething. Agatha with tears conjured the girl to pay him every poſſible attention, and promiſed her that if he recovered, ſhe ſhould be very amply rewarded.

As ſoon as the girl was gone, Agatha ſent for the confeſſor, and entreated him to go to the poor man immediately, to take with him ſome wine and cordials, and to ſee that he was treated with the utmoſt care and tenderneſs. She ſhewed him the letter ſhe had received from Lady Belmont, and deſired him, if it were poſſible, to ſeize an opportunity of ſpeaking to the meſſenger alone, and

to

to gain all the information he could reſpecting her parents. She deſired he would extort from him a ſolemn promiſe to regard no expence during his illneſs, aſſuring him that ſhe had jewels the value of which was more than ſufficient to defray all the charges of their journey. She would have given worlds to have accompanied the father herſelf; but aware that her preſence, however ſhe might be diſguiſed, would excite ſuſpicion, dared not indulge her wiſhes.

The prieſt did not return that night nor the next day, and Agatha's terror every moment encreaſed. At length he arrived, but with a countenance too plainly indicative of the melancholy news he brought. The faithful meſſenger was ſpeechleſs when he arrived, and though he lingered in that ſtate four and twenty hours, before he left him, had breathed his laſt.

This dreadful intelligence was a dagger to the heart of Agatha. Beſides the grief which equally from humanity and gratitude, ſhe felt on account of the death of one whoſe fidelity to her parents, and ſolicitude to ſerve them,

had probably brought him to the grave, ſhe had now loſt the hope of being reſtored to them; while the reflection that they were perhaps delaying their own journey, and expoſing themſelves to danger while they waited for her, and were enduring at that moment all the anguiſh of ſuſpenſe and apprehenſion on her account, was another and ſeverer ſource of ſorrow. She would have fled to them now, but the fatal precaution of not mentioning in the letter the place where they were, had rendered this impoſſible.

In a ſtate of terror and miſery little ſhort of diſtraction, ſhe paſſed a dreadful fortnight, during which ſhe was unable to gain any intelligence concerning her parents. One moment her imagination painted them ſeized and impriſoned, the next beheld them enduring all the miſeries of a mock trial and falſe accuſation, and periſhing at laſt under the axe of the executioner. Her only comfort was derived from the hope that if they had been taken, the fatal tidings would by ſome means have reached her.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

AS ſhe was wandering alone in the grove one evening, indulging the melancholy which oppreſſed her heart, her memory reverted to the bleſſings ſhe had enjoyed a few months paſt, when ſhe was ſure every day of beholding the parents by whom ſhe was idolized, of enjoying the ſweet delight of their approving ſmiles; when, without a care or fear to embitter the tranquility of every hour, ſhe knew no anxiety but for the poor objects of her bounty, or how to repay her debt of gratitude to the moſt indulgent of mothers. Now, ſad reverſe! She ſaw herſelf threatened by evils with which ſhe knew not how to contend—deprived of her parents when moſt ſhe might want their ſuccour;—and, more terrible yet! every moment trembling for their ſafety!

From this melancholy reverie ſhe was awakened by the ſound of ſeveral voices on the other ſide of the wall; and in the ſame

inſtant Madame St. Clermont approached her, exclaiming, as ſhe folded her hands in an agony of terror, that they were undone—that at that moment there were people breaking down the wall, and preparing to deſtroy the convent. She had ſcarcely ſpoken, when the iron gates were forced open, and the mob entered. Madame St. Clermont, with a firmneſs and dignity, which inſpired at once awe and amazement, inſtead of flying from, now advanced towards them.

"My friends and countrymen," ſhe ſaid, "what have we done, how behaved towards "you, to deſerve this treatment?—To this "convent we retired to worſhip God; to "devote to works of charity thoſe fortunes "which might elſe have been ſquandered in "luxury. Who is there among you that has "been ſick or unfortunate, who, coming to "our grate, has not obtained relief? To your "wants and neceſſities it has been equally "our pride and pleaſure to adminiſter. "Enough to ſupply the common exigencies "of nature is all we deſire; to you—to the "world we give our ſuperfluous wealth.—

You

"You are free. I rejoice in your freedom.
"I have thanked Heaven for it. But de-
"prive us not of liberty becauſe you have
"obtained your own. We are not free if
"you compel us to quit the convent to which
"we have choſen to retire. And ſhall the
"champions of Liberty be Tyrants? Shall
"they uſe their freedom as a cloak for ma-
"liciouſneſs? And becauſe ſecured in their
"own poſſeſſion deprive us of ours? Becauſe
"no inſolent invader dare trample on their
"rights, or withhold from them the fruit of
"their labour, ſhall not we be ſuffered to eat
"our morſel in peace? No—I will not be-
"lieve it poſſible. You cannot act like
"wolves and tygers prowling for their prey
"—you are my countrymen, men heretofore
"generous, liberal, and humane, who would
"have ſcorned to inſult the defenceleſs, or to
"trample upon the worm, becauſe it can
"neither reſiſt nor return the injury."

The mob, awed and aſtoniſhed, ſuſpended their work of deſtruction, and without making a reply, retired in apparent confuſion.

"Heaven be praiſed," ſaid Agatha, when

" they were out of ſight, " Heaven be praiſ-
" ed, that has given to your lips the eloquence
" of angels!"

" Alas! my ſweet ſiſter," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " we have little cauſe for exulta-
" tion; yet I bleſs Heaven for this tempo-
" rary releaſe—temporary as I fear it will be.
" But let us employ this interval to provide
" for our ſafety. They will return, I doubt
" not; every thing of value, therefore, that
" we can carry ſecretly we muſt haſten to
" ſecure, and quitting the convent, fly as
" Heaven ſhall direct our ſteps. I, alas! can
" ill protect you—myſelf long ſince obnoxi-
" ous on account of my nobility, and perhaps
" rendered more ſo by this appeal to them,
" though it has ſuſpended their fury for the
" moment."

Agatha and Madame St. Clermont now haſtened to the convent, where, having ſecured the doors, the Lady Abbeſs aſſembled the nuns, and took a tender and affecting leave of each in her turn; admoniſhing every one to remember her vows, and to ſuffer neither the terrors nor temptations of the world to induce

duce their violation. She adviſed them to go to their friends, in purſuance of their former intentions, and told them, that ſhe ſhould travel on foot and alone, having learned from too certain information that her life was threatened, and ſhe would not therefore involve another in her danger; ſince, to be found with her would be a ſufficient ground for accuſation.

Agatha, Siſter Agnes, and ſeveral others conjured her to ſuffer them to ſhare her fate—and Agatha implored her not to rob her of her ſecond mother; but Madame St. Clermont, firm in her determination, reſiſted their entreaties with tears of grateful affection.

Agatha, accompanied by Siſter Agnes, determined to proceed towards the ſouthern coaſt, in hopes that, as there was a poſſibility of it at leaſt, they might find or overtake her parents.

A loud noiſe, accompanied by ſongs and ſhouting at intervals was now again heard; and from the windows of the convent they ſaw the mob buſied in deſtroying the trees, and every other ornament of the garden. With

ferocious pleaſure, the flowers and ſhrubs were trampled under foot, or torn up by the roots; the beautiful ſeats were hewn in pieces; even the lawn did not eſcape their fury—the turf was dug up, and not a blade of graſs ſuffered to remain; and in little more than an hour, ſcarcely a veſtige of cultivation was diſcernible.

During this time, flight was impoſſible. Some of the mob ſurrounded the convent, while the reſt were employed in laying waſte the grounds around it.

It was now almoſt dark; and ſome of them were heard to propoſe to retire for the preſent, declaring they would return the next day to complete their work. With reiterated ſhouts of applauſe, they now therefore abandoned their prey.

When the ravagers were out of ſight, Madame St. Clermont once more bad every one farewell, and proceeded to unlock and unbar the doors.

Agatha went to her cell, to bid a long and laſt adieu to a ſcene which, dreary and comfortleſs as it had once appeared, was now become

come dear to her, and was never entered but with mingled awe and affection. The ſtone table, the lamp, the bare walls, as the feeble remains of light were juſt ſufficient to permit her to diſcern them, ſhe viewed as ſo many friends from whom ſhe was about to part for ever. She now remembered with aſtoniſhment the pain ſhe had once felt on contemplating each; and comparing her preſent comfortleſs ſituation—deſtitute of a home—divided from her parents, about to wander expoſed perhaps to all the miſeries of want—with one only companion, whoſe preſence, great as was the comfort it would afford her, could be no protection from inſult or danger—comparing this melancholy ſituation with that when firſt ſhe entered her cell, it ſeemed a crime to have repined at a fate which now appeared to have been ſo replete with bleſſings.

Commending herſelf to Heaven, and putting the jewels in her boſom for the greater ſecurity, ſhe now left her cell, and went in ſearch of Siſter Agnes. She went to Siſter Agnes' cell, but ſhe was not there; ſhe called,

and no one anſwered. She was met by a nun flying in terror towards the chapel. "Where "is Siſter Agnes?" ſaid Agatha, detaining her. "I know not, replied the nun. Let me "go, for God's ſake!—Save yourſelf—they "are coming again." In inconceivable terror, Agatha now ran to every part of the convent, calling aloud to Siſter Agnes. But no one anſwered. Every one appeared to have fled, and ſhe ſeemed alone in the convent. She returned again to the cells—entered each of them—but ſaw no one.

She could now diſtinguiſh ſhouts at a diſtance at intervals; and paſſing through the gallery, deſcended to the chapel. She here again called to Siſter Agnes; but was anſwered only by the echoes of the vaulted roofs repeating the ſound. The iron gates were open. She paſſed through them into the body of the church. It was now ſo dark that ſhe could ſcarcely diſtinguiſh any of the objects around her. She went to the great door, which ſtood open, and heard the ſhouts repeated, and ſeeming to be nearer. Breathleſs with terror, ſhe leaned againſt a pillar at the

the door. Some one now glided by her. She caught hold of them; but with inconceivable ſwiftneſs they eſcaped from her hold. Agatha would have ſpoken; but ſpeech was now denied her—and faint and ſick to death, ſhe ſunk upon the pavement.

The ſhouts, heard yet more diſtinctly, again rouſed her; and with an effort of ſtrength, which terror gave her for the moment, ſhe roſe, and ran from the convent ſhe knew not whither, endeavouring only to fly from the noiſe.

CHAP. IX.

AGATHA ran till ſhe heard the ſhouts no longer, when, breathleſs and exhauſted, ſhe again fell down. She, who, till now, had never been divided from friends whoſe delight it was to cheriſh and protect her, who "would not ſuffer even the winds of heaven "to viſit her face too roughly," now, without one friend or human being near her, convulſed by fear, and almoſt bereft of life, lay on

on the damp graſs, with ſcarcely a ray of light from Heaven to chear her. She, who never ſaw a ſorrow that ſhe did not ſeek to mitigate, who, in her infant years, fancied her little heart would break on beholding an object of diſtreſs, had now no kind hand to raiſe or ſupport her, heard no friendly voice to call her back to life and reaſon.

She lay in this ſtate ſome hours. At length, awaking to a ſenſe of her ſituation, ſhe endeavoured to riſe, but twice ſunk down again in the attempt. At laſt ſupporting herſelf by a tree, near which ſhe chanced to have fallen, ſhe aroſe, and walked ſlowly on.

Some drops of rain now fell. Apprehendſive of more, and ſomething dark before her having the appearance of a wood, ſhe feebly walked towards it, and ſoon found herſelf in a foreſt, the thick trees of which promiſed her ſhelter from the ſtorm that ſeemed to be approaching. But here ſhe had new cauſe for terror. She diſtinctly heard the howling of wolves at a ſmall diſtance from her. Yet even in this dreadful ſituation, in a dark and tempeſtuous night, alone in a foreſt, hope and

conſcious

conſcious innocence ſupported her. She had never intentionally offended Heaven in the moſt trivial inſtance; and when her ſpirits became ſufficiently collected to reflect, ſhe felt aſſured of its protection: or, ſhould ſhe periſh, death would be but a releaſe from future ſufferings; and from a world of care and trouble, ſhe ſhould awake in one of pure and endleſs bliſs.

Conſoled by this idea, her ſpirits became more calm; and after revolving in her mind the ſad proſpect before her, ſhe at length determined to remain in her preſent ſituation, terrifying as it was, till day light appearing, ſhould enable her to purſue ſome track to a village or town, where ſhe might perhaps find ſhelter under ſome hoſpitable roof, till ſhe could procure a guide to conduct her on her melancholy route. She now felt for her jewels, alarmed, leſt in her fall ſhe might, by ſome means, have dropped them from her boſom, and found they were ſafe.

The day, at length, broke; and the ſun, as it burſt through the clouds of the horizon, gave to the face of nature an appearance, which,

which, contraſted with the horrors of the preceding night, ſeemed to Agatha gay and delightful. The birds awakened, ſang on the branches over her head; innumerable moving inſects were diſcernible among the leaves; a ſquirrel hopped on a tree adjacent; an hare ran acroſs the path before her; all beſpoke her ſurrounded by the peaceful inhabitants of the foreſt, from whom ſhe had nothing to fear, and whoſe preſence enlivened the ſcene, and ſeemed a conſoling ſubſtitute for the ſociety of man. A thouſand delightful ſcents regaled her. The wild thyme and laurel roſe peeping through the underwood rendered the path ſhe was preparing to traverſe as fragrant as it was beautiful.

Turning into a little winding alley, on which the prints of human footſteps were now and then diſcernible, ſhe walked, as ſhe conjectured, more than three miles along the track before ſhe diſcovered any termination of the foreſt. As ſhe went along, ſhe picked a few wild berries, and was ſtopping to gather ſome more, when a beautiful little bird perched on a branch near her, and pecking ſome

of

of the berries, ſeemed jealous though fearleſs of the invader of his little treaſures. The idea ſtruck Agatha as the bird ſeemed to watch her motions. "Forgive me," ſhe ſaid, a tear ſtarting in her eye as ſhe ſpoke, "forgive me that I rob thee of thy food: I, "alas! have no other—or I would not take a "berry from thee."

The path at laſt led her to a little lane at the end of the foreſt, nearly covered with graſs. Continuing along this for ſome time, a wider, and apparently more frequented road croſſed it. Agatha was uncertain whether to turn to the right or left; ſince no appearance of any habitation was to be ſeen on either ſide—when, after heſitating ſome time ſhe fancied ſhe heard the voices of children on her left, and took that road. At ſome diſtance ſhe ſaw two little boys picking up leaves under a tree, and enquiring the way to the neareſt village or town, was directed by them to continue in the ſame road, and ſhe would arrive at the village they came from, which was not more than half a league diſtant.

Animated by hope, weary and faint as ſhe was

was from walking, and from want of ſleep and refreſhment, ſhe ſoon arrived at the village. The firſt houſe in it was a cottage, the door of which ſtood open; and a tall, thin, maſculine woman came out of the houſe as ſhe approached it. Her countenance had nothing in it which beſpoke kindneſs or hoſpitality, but Agatha, feeling faint with fatigue, and being ſenſible that every ſtep ſhe took ſhe grew worſe, ſtopped at the door of her cottage, and aſked permiſſion to go into the houſe and reſt herſelf for ſome minutes.

"Not that you know of," replied the woman; "I take no lodgers I aſſure you."

"I did not aſk to lodge with you," ſaid Agatha, "but I have walked many miles, "and am faint and weary. I wiſhed but to "ſit down for a few minutes."

"I ſhall harbour no ſuch people, I can aſ- "ſure you," replied the woman; "I never "let nuns come into my houſe—it might be "the worſe for me if I did."

"Alas!" ſaid Agatha, "I hope you may "never want a home to ſhelter you."

"I hope not," returned the woman; "but

" but I know better than to beg for one if " I did."

Agatha now attempted to go; but faint and weary, her tottering limbs refuſed to ſupport her, and, ſcarcely able to ſtand, ſhe leaned againſt the wall. Feeling herſelf ſick through want, and abſolutely incapable of proceeding without ſomething to ſuſtain her, cruel as was the treatment ſhe had already experienced, ſhe ventured to aſk for a morſel of bread.

" I tell you," replied the barbarous wretch, " I never give any thing to beggars. Why " we have nuns coming here continually, and " all of them with theſe diſmal ſtories, and " if we were ever to ſerve them there would " be no end of it."

" God help them!" ſaid Agatha.

" Aye, aye, God muſt help them now, " they have nothing elſe for it. The Con- " vention knows better than to maintain a " pack of fat, lazy monks and nuns in idle- " neſs. No, no, they muſt all troop, and " learn to work or ſtarve: and ſo 'tis fit they " ſhould."

" Give

"Give me but a drop of water," ſaid Agatha, growing fainter and fainter.

"Water!" ſaid the woman; "no, no,—"you nuns and friars like a draught of ſome-"thing better than water—that's your cha-"racters of old time."

Then laughing at her own wit, ſhe turned round, and walked away; when a little girl about ſix years old, ſeeing Agatha's diſtreſs, ran into the houſe, and bringing a little mug of water, held it to her with tears in her eyes. Agatha offered to take it from her, but her trembling hand was incapable of holding it. The little girl then, drawing a block of wood nearer to her, ſtood upon it, and putting one hand behind Agatha with endeavour to ſupport her, and holding with the other the cup to her quivering lips, "Here Lady"—ſhe ſaid. Agatha ſwallowed the water, and turning to the ſweet child, who was eſſaying to ſupport her in her little arms, her tears fell upon her neck. The little girl ſtroked them off, and looking up in Agatha's face with an expreſſion of the tendereſt concern, repeated ſeveral times, in a voice of pity, "Dear Lady! "poor Lady!"

Agatha,

Agatha, revived by the water, and the tears which the little innocent's kindneſs had brought to flow, was now able to walk, and was preparing to go, when the woman returned, and ſeeing the child attending on Agatha, called to her, in a tone of anger, "Mary, I charge "you, let her alone. You know I bid you "never go to them." The child, however, watching till ſhe was again out of ſight, renewed her gentle endeavours to comfort Agatha, who, putting her hand in her pocket, found a ſmall enamelled box—"Here Mary," ſhe ſaid, "keep this; and whenever you look "at it, pray to God to make you always thus "kind to the poor and unhappy." Then kiſſing her little hand as ſhe put the box into it, ſhe walked with feeble ſteps from the cottage, and felt, for the firſt time in her life, what it is to be a beggar!

Agatha aſked admittance at ſeveral other houſes, but was always denied; by ſome, indeed, without inſult, and by others even with an expreſſion of pity and concern—yet ſtill ſhe was denied. *Eh quoi!—recevoir chez moi une Fanatique—une Religieuſe!—c'eſt impoſſible!*

ble! "What receive into my houſe a Fana-
"tic—a Nun! impoſſible—" was the gene-
ral reply to her ſolicitations. In the haſte and affright in which ſhe quitted the convent, ſhe had forgotten to take with her two Louis which were all that remained of the laſt ſum which her mother had brought her to diſpenſe in charity: money, therefore, ſhe had none; and in the fear of exciting ſuſpicions of her birth, or perhaps being plundered of them, ſhe dared not offer any of the jewels in return for the kindneſs ſhe ſolicited.

She had now reached the laſt houſe in the village, and wearied with fruitleſs ſolicitations, could not bear again to plead in vain; but unable to walk farther, ſat down on a green bank by the ſide of the road. Here, at leaſt, ſhe ſaid, may I reſt my wearied limbs. The poor, forlorn, and hungry wanderer here may ſit, under the canopy of Heaven; here reſt till want and ſorrow ſend her to a kinder home—till ſhe "reſt from all her "labours." But ſhall no friendly hand cloſe my dying eyes? no one watch over my poor remains, and conſign them with tears and prayers

prayers to their native duſt?—Alas! no. But that is nothing. I ſhall wake in Heaven; and in the preſence of my God look down as on a dream on all my ſorrows paſt.

Lifting up her head, as it reſted on her hand, ſhe obſerved a man at the door of the houſe oppoſite, in whoſe rough features there ſeemed an expreſſion of pity, and a ſomething which beſpoke the workings of humanity as he looked at her. Her applications had hitherto been to thoſe of her own ſex; and having found cruelty where moſt ſhe looked for compaſſion, ſhe thought ſhe might perhaps experience kinder treatment where there was leſs reaſon to expect it. She therefore feebly roſe, and directing her tottering ſteps to the cottage—"I almoſt fear," ſhe ſaid, "ſo often "have I pleaded in vain, to aſk if you will "ſuffer an unfortunate traveller to reſt in "your houſe for ſome hours, and will beſtow "the farther benefit of a little refreſhment— "no matter what."

The man, whoſe ſtern features ſeemed but to have relaxed into a momentary kindneſs to induce her to implore his aſſiſtance, aſſuming

inſtantly an appearance of ſeverity, anſwered in a loud and imperious tone, looking around him as he ſpoke, "No wretch—I have nei-"ther food nor lodging for the religious of "either ſex." Speaking now in a lower voice, he ſaid, "Go into that garden and take "what fruit you find. Look near a root of "eryngo." Then, again raiſing his voice, "Yes, the refuſe of my garden is all I can "allow you—but dare not to enter it till I "permit you."

The man now left her, and returning in a few minutes, beckoned to her to go into the garden. Agatha, ſtruck by the ſingularity of his manner, in which compaſſion and cruelty appeared by turns predominant, heſitated whether to accept his hardly-granted favours, and take the "refuſe of his garden." Alone and unprotected, fear too withheld her. The little kindneſs he betrayed might be aſſumed. It might be known or ſuſpected, that ſhe was the daughter of Sir Charles Belmont; ſince ſhe was known to many by the alms diſpenſed at her grate. He might wiſh to trepan and impriſon her. A thouſand dreadful ideas

crowded

crowded into her imagination, and made the miſeries of want ſeem light in compariſon. Yet recollecting that, if indeed he wiſhed to betray her, ſuch an artifice was unneceſſary, ſince, were he to ſeize her in the road, no one would offer to protect or ſcreen her from his power, believing too, that an appearance of diſtruſt might encreaſe her danger, if any there were, with a trembling hand ſhe opened the little wicket, and entered the garden. She ſaw no one, nor any fruit in it, but going towards an eryngo as ſhe had been directed, cloſe to its blue ſtalk ſhe found a loaf of bread, and near it ſome olives and dried grapes. As ſhe took up the loaf it broke aſunder, and ſix franks fell out of it. Raiſing her hands and eyes to Heaven, ſhe was returning thanks for this unexpected relief, when a little boy ran to her, ſaying in a whiſper, "Take what you "have found, nun, hide it, and go directly;" and without waiting for a reply, was out of ſight in a moment. Agatha, who now diſcovered that fear for his own ſafety had alone occaſioned the harſh treatment ſhe had received from her generous benefactor, felt a ſenſa-

tion of ſelf-accuſation on remembering that ſhe had ſuſpected his ſincerity, and obeying the directions given her, hid the loaf and franks, and haſtened out of the garden; the man bidding her begone, as ſhe paſſed the door, in a tone of anger.

Unhappy country! ſaid Agatha, as ſhe walked ſlowly along, unhappy country! where cruelty, under a thouſand hideous ſhapes, dares ſhew herſelf, and glory in her deformity; while charity, if ſhe would eſcape danger, muſt ſkulk under the ſame hateful forms. Wretched people! who, if ye would, dare not be virtuous.

When ſhe was out of ſight of the village, ſhe ſat down on the graſs, and ſpread her humble repaſt before her. She had eaten nothing ſince eleven o'clock the day before, and ſo refreſhing and delicious ſeemed the homely meal, that, had but the friends ſhe loved and lamented been preſent to ſhare it with her, ſhe would have thought it delightful. But when her own ſufferings were leſs intenſe, her apprehenſions and anxiety for her parents encreaſed. She ſhuddered to reflect, that

perhaps

perhaps they were enduring evils far more terrible than her own—evils, from the bare idea of which ſhe ſhrunk with horror. Could ſhe have been aſſured of their ſafety, ſhe would have borne her own diſtreſſes, ſevere as they were, with chearful reſignation, grateful for the preſervation of lives which ſhe had ever held dearer than her own.

Having finiſhed her ſolitary breakfaſt, and ſlaked her thirſt at a brook near her, ſhe reſted ſome hours, and then proceeded along the road, in hopes of arriving at another village, where perhaps all would not be thus unkindly fearful of giving protection to the wretched. Surely, ſhe ſaid, ſome hoſpitable door will open to receive me. Some mother, who perhaps trembles for the fate of her own daughter, will pity and receive me for *her* ſake; or, at leaſt, direct my wandering ſteps, and enable me to return to my native country, where the weary traveller ſeldom pleads in vain; where no dread of impending danger withholds from the unfortunate the ſhelter and protection of the cottage; where virtue needs but to be ſeen to be beloved: where *real* free-

dom reigns; not that factitious liberty which *tyrannizes here*, and like the viper, wounds the boſom that has nurtured, and warmed it into life.

Agatha purſued her lonely journey for ſome miles without meeting any one, or arriving at an habitation of any kind. At length, dejected and weary, ſhe had ſat down under the ſhade of a ſpreading tree to reſt herſelf, and recover ſtrength to proceed, when ſhe obſerved two men at a diſtance, who, on eſpying her appeared to ſpeak to each other, and quickening their pace, advanced towards her. Their dreſs and appearance beſpoke them above the lower rank; yet there was ſomething in their manner which alarmed her, and made her deſirous to avoid them. But no means of eſcape were practicable. No friendly dwelling was near in which ſhe could ſeek ſhelter; and were ſhe to attempt it, ſhe could not run ſo faſt as they could purſue. Believing, therefore, that there would be leſs danger in appearing to diſregard them, than in betraying her fears, ſhe roſe, and ſeeming not to have obſerved them, walked ſlowly, and tremblingly on.

" You

"You had chosen a very romantic situa-
"tion, fair nun," said one of them as he overtook her, "a shepherd and his flock "would have made it perfect Arcadia to you. "You have reason to thank your countrymen "for throwing down the walls that enclosed "you. What a shame it was," continued he, turning to his companion, "to shut up "such a lovely young creature from us! My "dear," taking her hand, "how long has "your cage door been open?"

"For pity's sake, Sir," said Agatha, greatly alarmed, yet fearing to incense him by betraying any resentment, "for pity's sake "do not detain me—I have friends waiting "for me."

"O! they would wait with pleasure if "they knew how agreeably you were detain-
"ed. Besides, I have certainly more gal-
"lantry than to suffer you to proceed alone—
"Fainrive, take the lady's other hand. You "see, Madam, I am not like your father con-
"fessors, who wish to engross all the trea-
"sures themselves." Then snatching a kiss, he bad his companion take one likewise.

"Bleſſed Virgin, protect me!" ſaid Agatha ſcreaming, and forcing her hands from their rude graſp.

"Nay, nay," ſaid one of them, again catching hold of her, "that bleſſed Virgin Lady "herſelf was no nun, if I remember right; "and ſhe would be very glad to ſee you ſo "well diſpoſed of. Upon my honour, if all "nuns were as pretty, they would be in a "ſtate of requiſition preſently, and the next "generation of Pariſians would be all the "bantlings of *les Meſdames Religieuſes.*"

"O Sir!" ſaid Agatha, again forcing her hands from them, and folding them together, in an agony of terror and ſupplication, "if you "have any wife, ſiſter, or daughter of your "own, think, O! think of them! think if "they were thus friendleſs and unprotected, "how you would bleſs thoſe whoſe benevo-"lent hearts pitied their diſtreſs, and forbore "to inſult and torture them. For God Al-"mighty's ſake ſuffer me to purſue my jour-"ney, and the lateſt hour I live I will bleſs "your goodneſs."

"Why my deareſt Madam, you have cer-

"tainly

" tainly been an actreſs, and ſick of the thea-
" tre, in a fit of jealous or religious phrenzy,
" have played the fool, and ran into a nun-
" nery. Come, be ſincere with us—Is it not
" ſo?—But, however, ſince you want a *pro-*
" *tector*, I am very much at your ſervice.
" When your dreſs is a little modernized, you
" will make a charming figure as the conduc-
" treſs of my *petits ſoupers*." Then, with the aſſiſtance of his companion, he was dragging her along, while Agatha, almoſt deprived of reaſon, in a voice of diſtraction and deſpair, called on her father—her mother—then, with wildneſs in her voice and geſtures, again beſought their pity, when a blow from an unſeen hand, felled her inſulter to the ground. The other inſtantly fled; leaving his companion wounded, and apparently lifeleſs on the ground.

Overpowered by terror, Agatha fainted in the arms of her deliverer.

" My Agatha—Miſs Belmont! beſt-be-
" loved of my ſoul! look up," ſaid a voice, whoſe tender accents called her back to life.

Agatha looked up—She was in the arms of Hammond.

" Mr. Hammond! my preſerver—my de-
" liverer!"

" Miſs Belmont! my angel! And do I ſee
" thee again? And doſt thou live!"

" Yes, to bleſs the hand that ſaved me.
" Yet is it poſſible?—Mr. Hammond!"

" More than a year concealed in theſe en-
" virons—But another time I will tell you
" all. We muſt now fly, and with all the
" ſpeed poſſible. The villain who eſcaped
" will alarm the neighbours, and they will
" return with him to ſeize me."

" O! let us not loſe a moment," ſaid Agatha.

The wounded man, who, ſick with pain and loſs of blood, yet lay on the graſs, now conjured them not to leave him to periſh.

" Little as is the compaſſion you deſerve," ſaid Hammond, " who felt none for another,
" I hazard my own ſafety and that of one
" infinitely dearer, to preſerve your life."
While he ſpoke thus, he bound his handkerchief over the wound to ſtop the bleeding; then,

then, taking the hand of Agatha, fled with her from the fatal ſpot. Fear for the ſafety of Hammond, and joy at meeting thus a friend and protector when moſt ſhe wanted one, gave wings to her feet, and ſhe rather flew than ran with him, till they arrived in a valley, where a thick coppice ſcreened them from view.

CHAP. X.

IN order to elude purſuit, they had quitted the road, and taken the moſt unfrequented path. Believing themſelves, however, not yet ſafe, when Agatha had reſted ſome minutes, they again fled towards a hill, on the declivity of which was a hollow, where Hammond, charmed with its romantic beauties, had paſſed many ſolitary hours; and where, as the path to it was difficult, and, to thoſe unaccuſtomed to its windings, extremely dangerous, a river daſhing with impetuoſity againſt the ſtones at the bottom of its almoſt perpendicular ſide, they might, he was aſſur-

ed, remain ſecure, till the welcome cover of the night ſhould enable them to purſue their journey to the coaſt. Perfectly acquainted with every part of the country, he purpoſed to travel during the nights, and in the days to reſt in ſome of the unfrequented ſpots, of which he had acquired a knowledge.

When they had reached their place of refuge, Agatha enquired of Hammond by what ſtrange, yet bleſt chance he had found and reſcued her from inſult.

" When from Mrs. Herbert I learned the " fatal intelligence," ſaid Hammond, " which " planted everlaſting daggers in my breaſt, " when I learned from her, that a cruel and " fatal neceſſity forced you to abandon the " world, which, when you had forſaken it, " had not a bleſſing to give me, I believed " that my reaſon would have ſunk under the " burthen of my ſorrows. I haunted as a " ghoſt every ſpot that had been endeared by " your preſence. O! my Agatha! loſt in " the luxury of woe, I was indeed dead to " the world. My friends ſpoke to me—I " heard them not; they ſought to comfort " me—

" me——and I ſhrunk from their endea-
" vours to divert your image from my ſoul,
" as the pious Chriſtian ſhrinks from the
" ſpecious arguments with which the vain-
" glorious philoſopher ſeeks to undermine
" the tenets of his belief, and tempt him
" from his God. To forget you, though but
" for a moment, ſeemed a crime. There was
" a ſhrub in my garden, which had fallen,
" neglected, to the earth. Alas! poor thing!
" you ſaid—It has loſt its miſtreſs—and how
" it droops! You raiſed and propped it, while
" your tears fell upon the leaves. Thoſe leaves
" ——O! my Agatha!——"

" Mr. Hammond, forbear, I conjure you!" ſaid Agatha, greatly affected. " I muſt not
" hear this. May Heaven preſerve and bleſs
" you! but we muſt forget, for ever forget
" thoſe moments when it was no crime to
" hope to call each other by a dearer name
" than friend. Do not therefore, I again
" conjure you, renew this ſubject—quit it,
" for both our ſakes, my deareſt friend, and
" revert only to the period when you came to
" this diſtracted country."

"Merciful Heaven!" ſaid Hammond; "and is it become a crime but to remember "that I once was bleſt? Can my Agatha—— "*my* Agatha! did I ſay? No; I have been "forgotten by *her*, while years and years have "been witneſs of *my* attachment."

"Hammond, not leſs fervent, not leſs ſin- "cere has been—is ſtill my attachment to "you. Heaven is my witneſs that my own "happineſs would ſhrink to nothing in my "eſtimation when compared with yours, were "both in my power. But I have vowed to "devote myſelf to God; and ſhould "your "image ſteal betwixt my God and me?" No— "my beſt friend—my preſerver—I were in- "deed unworthy of your friendſhip had that "been poſſible. Would the Eloiſa of Pope "deſerve the eſteem of Hammond! No, with "ſentiments noble as are yours, ideas of rec- "titude pure and ſpotleſs as I know you to "poſſeſs, you would not deſire to live as "other than as friend in a heart that could "not without a crime be yours. Here then "let us cloſe this fatal ſubject. And now, "will my deliverer and friend purſue his nar- "rative?"

"Noble!

"Noble! noble Miſs Belmont!—every "way my ſuperior! Yes, I will endeavour to "be all you deſire. Yet ſuffer me once "more to return to the commencement of "my relation; I will conceal as much as "poſſible what I then endured.—From the "ſtate of deſpair and miſery I have repre-"ſented, I was, at length, in ſome meaſure, "recovered by the peruſal of a fragment "which I accidentally found among my "ſiſter's papers. It was written by her hand, "and was probably her own compoſition, "ſince the ſentiments contained in it, were "thoſe by which her conduct was regulated, "and which equally adorned and ennobled her "character. Struck by the juſtice of the "leſſon it inculcated, I no longer believed it "a virtue to indulge my grief; and though "the admonitions of an angel could not "have obliterated your idea, I ſtrove to dwell "upon it with leſs anguiſh, to fulfil the du-"ties I owed to ſociety, and for your ſake "even, (remembering your earneſt entreaties "during the agonizing hour which preceded "our ſeparation) to be no longer inſenſible "to the benevolent attentions of my friends."

"Do

"Do you recollect any part of the frag-
"ment?" ſaid Agatha.

"It was too deeply impreſſed on my mind
"ever to be effaced," replied Hammond.
"It began—"

'Child of ſorrow! why in this pilgrimage through a world of woe, doſt thou ſeek to heighten thine affliction? why, by unavailing regret, make rugged every path before thee? why ſpurn the admonitions of thy friends?

'Is it a crime to be comforted? Art thou guilty, if, forgetting thine own ſorrows, thou adminiſtereſt to the wants and neceſſities of the poor? or when thy voice diffuſes chear-fulneſs through the little ſociety around thee?

'Dareſt thou undermine thy conſtitution by ſadneſs? Dareſt thou ſay "LOVE is my GOD!
"and on his ALTAR I will ſacrifice this
"fabric, will ſap its foundations, and glory-
"ing in my crime, expect eternal honour for
"my conſtancy?"

'Live! live for ſhame. Live to ſubdue a paſſion deſigned to be ſubſervient to THEE, not THOU the SLAVE of its capricious will.

'Or,

'Or, if thou wilt *ſtill* love, call the deeds of virtue, of heroiſm, the heart of thy beloved: make *them* "the Gods of thy idolatry"—— then, though divided from her on earth, thou ſhalt deſerve to be united to her, where happineſs *is* happineſs, and "change ſhall be no "more"!'

"It ſeemed my Agatha, as if my ſiſter had "ſpoken to me from Heaven, had ſeen my "diſtreſſes, and charged me to be comforted. "From the moment in which I firſt read "this ſolemn adjuration, inſtead of indulg-"ing, I endeavoured to combat my feelings; "and, in compliance with the ſolicitations of "Mr. Ormiſtace, conſented to travel; leav-"ing my generous deliverer Iſraeli, whom I "had the exquiſite happineſs of meeting a "few weeks previous to my departure, the "inhabitant of my houſe during my abſence. "—Change of ſcene and ſociety, with the "unwearied endeavours of my friend, ren-"dered me, by degrees, leſs wretched. I "enquired, and learned that my Agatha, re-"ſigned to her dreadful lot, was calm, and,

"as

" as her friends hoped, happy. For worlds
" would I not have endangered that peace
" for which I hourly prayed, whatever were
" my own diſtreſſes—I therefore forbore,
" when I attended Mrs. Herbert to Iſſoire,
" to ſee you, nor would even ſuffer you to be
" informed that I was there."

" At Iſſoire with Mrs. Herbert?" ſaid Agatha. " Good Heavens!"

" Yes, my Agatha, I was indeed there;
" though fearing my preſence might alarm
" your parents, it was not known even to
" them. I took lodgings in a village near
" Iſſoire. Every returning day beheld my
" ſolitary footſteps traverſe the path that led
" to the convent; and hours and hours have
" I ſat and gazed upon the wall which en-
" cloſed all that my ſoul held dear. Once I
" heard your voice accompanying a guitar—
" no words can paint my feelings at that mo-
" ment—I hung upon the plaintive notes;
" and when the ſound ceaſed, every enjoy-
" ment ſeemed to have died away with it: I
" would have given worlds for its continu-
" ance. Time after time I liſtened at the

" ſame ſpot; but never heard it again. Yet
" I breathed the ſame air, beheld in part the
" ſame objects, ſaw faces on which you had
" looked not an hour before, and (though
" you knew it not) a few paces only divided
" us—to quit Iſſoire therefore ſeemed tearing
" myſelf from you; and all Mrs. Herbert's
" reaſonings, all the gentle ſoothings of her
" friendſhip, were neceſſary to enable me to
" ſupport the conflict.

" When from certain information I learned
" laſt year that the religious throughout
" France would ſhortly be compelled to quit
" the Monaſteries, and that thoſe, once be-
" held with veneration by their countrymen,
" were deſpiſed and inſulted; when I learned
" too, that the nobles, driven from their
" eſtates, were not leſs marked for deſtruc-
" tion, my apprehenſions for your ſafety, my
" Agatha, and, for your ſake, for that of
" your parents, rendered it impoſſible for me
" to remain paſſively in England, and not to
" endeavour, at leaſt, to ſhield you from op-
" preſſion; yet conſcious that my friends
" would combat a determination which they

" would

" would believe pregnant with danger to
" myſelf, I concealed from every one, and
" even from my boſom friend the generous
" Iſraeli, my intention of going to France:
" from him, indeed, I was obliged to conceal
" it, ſince his generous regard for me would
" not have ſuffered me to incur any danger
" alone.—Aware that I was preparing to viſit
" a country where the life of no one is ſecure,
" I provided myſelf with a hanger and a brace
" of piſtols, and informing my friends by
" letter from Dover, that a deſign, which I
" would at ſome future period communicate
" to them, induced me to travel for ſome
" months, poſſibly years, proceeded, under an
" aſſumed character to Iſſoire. I paſſed for
" an American, travelling in purſuit of a
" youth confided to my care, who, in a fit of
" anger had left his friends and country, and
" had gone, it was believed, to France.

" At Iſſoire, feigning to be charmed with
" the beauties of the country, and the newly-
" acquired freedom of its inhabitants, and
" pretending to deſpair of finding the youth
" of whom I came in ſearch, I have ſince

" lived,

" lived, though not without being regarded
" with an eye of ſuſpicion by the peaſants
" around me.—But O! my Agatha! To
" what ſcenes of complicated miſery and hor-
" ror have I been witneſs! Scenes which
" imagination even ſhudders to contemplate.
" The ferocity of the Moors is humanity, is
" gentleneſs compared to the ſpirit of *mur-*
" *derous liberty* that reigns here.

" A nobleman whom age and infirmity
" had confined to his bed, and who during
" fifty years had been the idol of his tenan-
" try, among whom it was his delight and
" pride to diſtribute his wealth, was dragged
" from his bed; that bed and all his furni-
" ture burned in his ſight, and himſelf after-
" wards murdered by thoſe hands which but
" a few years before had been lifted up to
" Heaven to invoke bleſſings on his head.
" His feeble voice bleſſed his murderers, and
" aſked forgiveneſs of their crimes. My
" Agatha, wilt thou believe me when I ſay,
" that I ſaw a child not ten years old wearing
" this unfortunate nobleman's ſword—that
" ſword which had been dyed in the blood of

" the

" the enemies of his country—the badge of
" his honour—which, while youth and vi-
" gour nerved his arm, no one could have
" wreſted from him—and while uttering hor-
" rid imprecations, unſheathing it to plunge
" it in the boſom of another infant whom he
" called an Ariſtocrat. I reſcued the child,
" though at the hazard of my own life; but
" was afterwards regarded with ſo much
" hatred and ſuſpicion that I could not much
" longer have remained in the neighbour-
" hood of Iſſoire. Ariſtocrat was whiſpered
" as I paſſed along; and a dagger once graz-
" ed my ſide from a hand out of a window
" of a cottage, which I had unguardedly
" paſſed too near. The cruel generally are
" cowards; and, on account of the weapons
" which I found it neceſſary to declare that I
" carried, no one dared attack me openly;
" but I had reaſon to believe that ſome ſpe-
" cies of vengeance was meditating againſt
" me, when the deſtruction of the convent
" rendered my continuance at Iſſoire no lon-
" ger neceſſary."

" No longer neceſſary!—O Mr. Ham-
" mond!

" mond! and for me—" ſaid Agatha, burſting into tears.

" My Agatha—why this?—What was " my own life when that of one infinitely " dearer was at ſtake? and every danger is a " thouſand—thouſand times overpaid by the " bleſſing of having protected thee. Heaven " ſurely inſpired the idea, and guided my " ſteps.—The intention of ſeizing Sir Charles " and Lady Belmont was kept ſo ſecret, that " I heard not of it till the news of their eſ- " cape cauſed a general tumult. Uncertain " whether my Agatha was a companion in " their flight, I remained ſome time in an " uncertainty which I dared not endeavour " to remove by enquiries. At length a tra- " veller falling ſick at a neighbouring cot- " tage, was viſited by the confeſſor of the " convent, who brought him every relief his " ſituation required; though, notwithſtand- " ing the aſſiſtance he received, he died the " next morning. I heard not of this till " ſome days afterwards, when the woman at " whoſe houſe I lodged repeated the circum- " ſtance, adding her ſuppoſition that the An-

" gel

" gel of Auvergne had heard of his illneſs, and " ſent him the relief. " For," continued ſhe, " the wretches that have eſcaped the puniſh- " ment their crimes deſerved, have not taken " the nun their daughter with them. No, " no—they left her to pacify the rage of the " people by charities and gifts; but that will " do nothing, I can tell them. Angel or not, " ſhe is a vile Ariſtocrat; and where is the " mighty goodneſs of giving away a property " ſhe had no right to poſſeſs?"—Thus, my " Agatha, I learned that you was yet in the " convent, and learned at the ſame inſtant, " that the hearts of the wretches around me, " ſcared by rapacious cruelty, were incapable " of a ſingle ſentiment of virtue or huma- " nity; for in the very ſentence in which ſhe " acknowledged your goodneſs, nay, called " you by the name your excellencies inſpired, " ſhe made a boaſt of her ingratitude.

" Paſſing my days chiefly in this ſolitary " ſpot, (Ah! little did I know that my Aga- " tha ſhould one day bleſs it with her pre- " ſence!) I converſed little with the people " around me: nor, indeed, was it ſafe; ſince

" the

" the Inquiſition itſelf, during the zenith of its
" power, was a merciful inſtitution compared
" to the ſyſtem of liberty prevalent here. A
" word of pity dropped accidentally for the
" fate of a murdered noble—a tear—a look
" of compaſſion even, are ſufficient to involve
" another in his pretended guilt. Then the
" inquiſitors could not be preſent, nor their
" ſpies for them, in every houſe, as is the
" caſe here, where every man's hand is
" againſt every man, and dark diſtruſt, and
" brooding fear have cloſed the lips of the
" once flippant and garrulous Frenchman.
" To accuſe another of pretended crimes is
" often the only way to ſcreen yourſelf from
" ſuſpicion; while, not unfrequently, the ſame
" part is played by ſome one elſe on you,
" who, in his turn, falls a ſacrifice to the
" temporary ſafety of another."

" Thus ever," ſaid Agatha, " are the guilty
" puniſhed by crimes reſembling their own;
" and thus has the inventor of almoſt every
" inſtrument of murder felt himſelf its edge."

" The intention of deſtroying the convent
" was, I believe, ſudden and unpremeditated,
" proceeded

" proceeded Hammond; ſince, though I
" converſed little with any one, I muſt have
" heard it whiſpered, had it not been a
" haſty plan. Indeed it is probable that they
" would not ſuffer the inhabitants of the
" convent to have previous warning, leſt they
" ſhould ſecure ſome of thoſe valuables
" which were the chief temptations to demo-
" liſh it.—I had paſſed the day in this ſpot;
" and returning late in the evening, found no
" one in the houſe in which I lodged. Uni-
" verſal ſtillneſs prevailed, and every one
" ſeemed to have forſaken their habitation.
" Unable to gueſs at the cauſe, I quitted
" the houſe, and walked to ſome diſtance,
" when the ſhouts I heard towards the con-
" vent firſt led me to ſuſpect the truth. I
" haſtened thither immediately. The mob
" were demoliſhing the walls, aud ſcattering
" the fragments of the ſtones around them;
" curſing ſuperſtition, yet vowing vengeance
" on its innocent victims could they find
" them. Happily every one had eſcaped;
" and their fury was vented only on the walls
" and furniture. In the cell of one of the

" nuns

" nuns, they found a miniature of a young
" man, which gave occaſion to ſeveral jeſts
" as low as they were illiberal. The picture
" was given to one of the leaders of the mob
" to be preſerved as a monument of *Religious*
" *Purity*.—I wandered alone all night in
" every path around the convent in hopes of
" finding my Agatha. But judge of my
" agony, when I was this morning addreſſed
" by a venerable old man, who declared to
" me and every one he ſaw, that the Angel of
" Auvergne was dead: that not knowing
" whither to go, ſhe had, it was true, taken
" ſhelter in his houſe, but that ſhe had died
" with terror during the night, and his ſon
" had thrown her body into the lake.—There
" was ſomething in the tale, and in the man-
" ner of the old man's telling it unaſked,
" which at the moment that it ſtruck like
" death to my heart, imparted a ray of hope
" that it was, for what reaſon I knew not, a
" fiction. With equal anxiety and terror I
" interrogated him further, but could learn
" nothing more from his replies. The more,
" however, I reflected upon it, the more rea-

" ſon I believed there was to hope that his
" ſtory was falſe, and probably the fabrica-
" tion of a grateful mind, which knew not
" how otherwiſe to return a benefit you
" might have conferred upon his children,
" than by thus preventing any ſearch that
" might have been intended after you, either
" on account of your parents, or of the riches
" you might be ſuppoſed to have received
" from them. Still, therefore, animated by
" hope, I determined to leave no part of the
" country unſearched; and chance, or rather
" Providence, directed my ſteps to the ſpot
" where I heard your ſcreams—I ſaw the bar-
" barous efforts of your inſulters to carry you
" away, and flying to them with a rage and
" agitation not to be deſcribed, wounded one
" of them with my hanger, and reſcued my
" Agatha."

When Hammond had finiſhed his recital, and Agatha had expreſſed, as well as her feelings would ſuffer her, the gratitude which penetrated her heart on account of the dangers he had incurred and the riſks he had ran for her ſake, ſhe related to him every circumſtance

ſtance which had befallen herſelf; while the miſeries and terror ſhe had endured affected him too deeply to ſuffer him to interrupt the mournful narration. When ſhe had ended it, he could only preſs her hand to his lips, and bathing it with tears, return ſilent thanks to Heaven for having at laſt given her to his protection.

Hammond now took out the remains of his yeſterday's repaſt—ſome dried fruits, wine, and biſcuits, and Agatha adding to it what remained of her ſolitary breakfaſt, they prepared to partake of a meal, which the preſence of each other, in a place of tolerable ſecurity, rendered ſweet to them. They then conſulted on the plan of their future journey; and Agatha, could ſhe have been aſſured of the ſafety of her parents, comparing her preſent ſituation, under the protection, and enjoying the ſociety of Hammond, with the deſolate and friendleſs one in which he had found her, would have been happy; but her apprehenſions for them, which Hammond in vain endeavoured to diſſipate, damped every bleſſing, and embittered every moment.

When the dews of evening began to fall, and the day ſhut in, Hammond, fearing that Agatha's health might ſuffer from the damps riſing from the water, and the little ſhelter afforded them from the night air, propoſed, as ſhe had ſuffered too much from fatigue and terror to be capable of walking far that night, to endeavour to obtain ſhelter in a cottage, the inhabitants of which he believed to be more humane than the generality; where they might perhaps not only procure ſhelter during that night and the next day, but might purchaſe proviſions to laſt them during great part of their journey.

CHAP. XI.

THE moon now darting its beams through a clump of trees before them, as juſt appearing in the horizon, it began to illuminate the ſcene, promiſed to afford ſufficient light to guide their ſteps; they therefore quitted the hill whoſe friendly-rugged paths had ſecured them from the danger of purſuit, and proceeded

proceeded towards the cottage, which was about three miles diſtant. Agatha weary and faint, but for the ſupport of Hammond would have ſunk under her fatigue; but his friendſhip and tenderneſs, by ſoothing her ſpirits, ſeemed to give her new ſtrength.

They were not, as Hammond believed, more than half a mile from the cottage, when the ſtorm which had only threatened the night before, began ſuddenly with a violence which ſeemed to ſhake the earth to its centre. The moon diſappeared in a moment. Burſts of thunder, each louder and more tremendous than the laſt, ſucceeded each other with dreadful rapidity. The rain fell in torrents; and the dazzling glare of the lightning alone afforded them a momentary view of the objects around them—while the violence of the wind, threatening to lift them from their feet, and ſcattering the branches of the trees around them, added to the other horrors of the ſtorm. Thus dreadfully ſituated, with no ſhelter in view except the trees, under which they dared not take refuge, a vivid flaſh of lightning diſcovered to Hammond the ruins of a monaſ-

tery at a ſmall diſtance. He remembered to have ſeen it as he once paſſed it, when the magnificence of its ruins had caught his eye; and on enquiry he had learned, that it had fallen to decay ſome centuries ago, and that the ſtones, as time or accident diſplaced them, were uſed by the peaſants around to repair their houſes, or for other purpoſes. Enough of the building yet remained, however, to afford them ſhelter. Directing their ſteps towards it therefore, as the repeated flaſhes of momentary light diſcovered its ſituation, they arrived before long at the venerable ſtructure. Going towards that part of it which Hammond remembered to have appeared leaſt decayed, they entered what ſeemed to have been the aiſle of a church. But here every clap of thunder threatened deſtruction. The tottering roof ſhook with the peal, and the wind, during the intervening moments, was hardly leſs terrifying. Unable, however, to find a ſafer ſhelter, they determined there to wait till the ſtorm was over.

After ſome hours, the thunder having ceaſed, the wind, now whiſtling through the ruinous

ous fabric, and now, ſeeming to collect addi-tional ſtrength, ſhaking the walls near which they ſtood, was the only cauſe of alarm. During ſome moments, in ſome of its guſts, it conveyed a ſound like that of deep and hol-low groans.

" The force of fancy, in ſuch a night and " ſuch a place as this, is wonderful," ſaid Agatha. " In every murmur of the wind " my imagination conveys to my ear groans " like thoſe which ſuperſtition ſometimes " gives to the reſtleſs ſpirits of the mur-der-" ed; and, though hitherto a ſtranger to ſuch " fears, I ſhudder at the ſound."

" Be not alarmed," ſaid Hammond; " yet " ſomething more than fancy, or the mur-" murs of the wind, occaſions thoſe groans— " for groans I am aſſured they are. Perhaps " ſome miſerable being is at this moment pe-" riſhing beneath theſe ruins. Perhaps ſome " one murdered and expiring here—But con-" jectures are fruitleſs—I will liſten whence " the ſound proceeds, and go towards it."

" O! do not," ſaid Agatha. " You know " not what dangers.—The murderers as well " as murdered may be here. Then, lower-

" ing her voice, ſhe conjured him to quit the " buſiding, regardleſs of the ſtorm, the fury " of which was already abated."

Hammond endeavoured to calm her fears; and having repreſented to her that it was poſſible ſome miſerable wretch expiring with want, diſeaſe, or grief, might have taken refuge in ſome part of the building, the horrors of whoſe dying moments their pity and attendance might leſſen; that perhaps the looſe ſtones had fallen on ſome unfortunate traveller, who, like themſelves, had ſought ſhelter there; Agatha's humanity in a moment conquered every apprehenſion for their own ſafety, and following Hammond, ſhe went along the aiſle towards the place from whence they had heard the noiſe: but it had ceaſed. The wind was ſtill, and nothing was heard but the echo of their own footſteps. They, however, were ſtill proceeding ſlowly along; though with difficulty, the looſe ſtones under their feet rendering it ſcarcely poſſible to walk without a light when Agatha's foot ſlipped, and as ſhe fell, endeavouring to ſave herſelf, ſhe caught hold of ſomething—It was

a hand

a hand, which, with the cold damp of death upon it, feebly graſped hers as ſhe touched it. Agatha ſcreamed. "Alas! whoever you are," ſaid a female voice, faint and gaſping for breath as ſhe ſpoke, "whoever you are that "like me have taken ſhelter here, fear no-"thing—wretch as I *have* been, I cannot now "injure you if I would."

The ſtorm was now at an end, and the moon appearing, gleamed through the chinks and wide clefts of the ſtone, and diſcovered to them a female lying on the pavement, on whoſe pale and haggard face, convulſed as it was by the agonies of death, the remains of former beauty were yet diſcernible. "I am "fearful," ſhe ſaid, again languidly ſpeaking, "that I have greatly terrified you—yet by "the mercy of that God whom my crimes "have offended, I conjure you to give me, if "it be poſſible, one drop of liquid to moiſten "my parched and burning lips. An inward "fire conſumes me."

"If we can give you the ſmalleſt relief, "we ſhall indeed be thankful," ſaid Agatha. "I am here, Madam—can you raiſe your

" head and reſt it on my arm." Then ſitting on the ground, Agatha put her arm under the head of the unfortunate lady; while Hammond, finding a few drops yet remaining of the wine he had with him, guided the bottle to her quivering lips.

" The bleſſing of one that is ready to periſh " be upon you!" ſaid the lady, who, ſomewhat revived, now ſpoke with leſs difficulty. " Generous ſtrangers, whoever ye are, " ſhould ye ever behold her whom I have " injured, will, O! will ye tell her how I am " puniſhed. Say, that with my lateſt breath " I bleſs *her*, and aſk of her forgiveneſs. " Tell her, that ſhe who robbed her of all ſhe " prized, periſhed thus miſerably, indebted " to the bounty of ſtrangers for comfort and " ſupport in her laſt moments. Bid her not " curſe my memory—but when I am no " more, pity and forgive the wretch who has " fallen the victim of her own crimes. Should " ye ever ſee or hear of Emily de Ver- " mueil——"

" Emily de Vermueil!" repeated Agatha. " Good God!"

" Alas!"

"Alas!" ſaid the lady, "perhaps ſhe is "known to you—O! aſk her to forgive me, "that her pardon may be an earneſt of the "mercy of that God of whom I dare not aſk "it. Will you then give her this ring—laſt "remnant of the fortune I robbed her of. "Yes—I will avow all my crimes—O! that "this confeſſion might make atonement for "them when I ſhall appear in the preſence "of that Judge in whoſe eternal Records "they are written.—I ſaw and loved (if that "paſſion deſerves the name of love, which "ſeeks only its own gratification) Henry "Dorville, the lover, the then *happy* lover of "the ſpotleſs Emily de Vermueil. His per-"ſon, his fortune were alike temptations to "my guilty heart. By the baſeſt arts I won "his affections, and tore him from his un-"deſigning and tender Emily. A few, very "ſhort months deſtroyed the illuſion. From "the love my artifices had created, he awoke "as from a dream; awoke to remorſe and "anguiſh. Proud and vindictive, I diſdain-"ed to court the favour of a heart alienated "by returning love to another. I returned

" his coldneſs with contempt and averſion;
" and forſaking him, fled with the property,
" which I knew he had neither ſpirits nor
" courage to endeavour to wreſt from my
" hands, to Paris, to loſe in the pleaſures of
" diſſipation the remembrance of him and of
" my own guilt. There, even before his
" death, I formed a connection with a man,
" in my guilty attachment to whom every
" remaining ſpark of virtue was ſmothered in
" my breaſt for ever. Regardleſs of the
" world and heedleſs of its cenſures, I gloried
" in my ſhame, and boaſted of having fixed
" a heart which had hitherto been divided
" among many. But that love which has
" not virtue for its baſis, is ſhaken by every
" blaſt, and has poiſon mingled with every
" pleaſure. Another object at length attach-
" ed him, and ſeduced him from me. In
" vain every art was eſſayed, in vain I ſtrove
" by thoſe allurements which had firſt pleaſed
" to win him back to my affections: what
" was intended to charm created but diſguſt;
" and my happy rival, triumphing in her
" power, joined her own inſidious pity to his
ſcorn.

" ſcorn. Stung by jealous rage, I denounced
" him to the people as a tyrant—an enemy
" to liberty!—My voice was heard. He was
" torne from the arms of my rival, and I met
" his mangled body dragged along the ſtreets.
" Filled with horror and remorſe, life was now
" a burthen to me; and I dared to precipitate
" myſelf into the preſence of the Eternal with
" all my crimes upon my head. I ſwallowed
" poiſon. But Heaven was merciful, and gave
" me time for repentance—yet can repentance
" waſh out crimes of a hue black as have been
" mine?—My ſtomach nauſeated the deadly
" draught, and enough only remained by
" lingering tortures to conſume me. De-
" termined to implore forgiveneſs of Made-
" moiſelle de Vermueil, and having been in-
" formed that ſhe reſided in this province, I
" have travelled hither, on foot and alone.
" But my ſtrength failing me, I have lingered
" two days and two nights among theſe ruins,
" in all the torments of pain and miſery—
" outcaſt of every one, with the aggravated
" horrors of knowing I deſerved my puniſh-
" ment. And O! that this were all! that

" in

" in this life might end my ſufferings!——"
" but in that which is to come——————O!"
" on the brink of what torments do I ſtand!"
Then graſping Agatha's hand with a convulſive ſtart, ſhe trembled violently, and ſhuddering with horror, ſcreamed as ſhe held it.

" Alas!" ſaid Agatha, " what ſhall I ſay
" to ſpeak comfort to you!—Yet O! re-
" member that the mercy of God is bound-
" leſs, is infinite as his power—the repentant
" and contrite heart he will not, we are aſſur-
" ed, deſpiſe. If my prayers, the prayers of
" one whoſe heart bleeds for your ſufferings,
" can be of any avail, I do and will pray for
" you from my ſoul."

" Kind Lady!" ſaid Madame Dorville,
" if your prayers are not heard for me, they
" muſt, they will bring down bleſſings on
" yourſelf. And O! whatever diſtreſſes you
" are born to ſuffer, may you be free from
" crime, and you cannot, you cannot indeed
" be wretched!—I have fallen a victim of
" violent and ungoverned paſſions—paſſions,
" which from my youth I have ſought to gra-
" tify, when it was my duty to have con-

" quered

"quered them." At this moment a convulſive pang ſeized Madame Dorville. The ſtrength which only ſeemed to have been lent her till ſhe had confeſſed her crimes, forſook her ſuddenly. She attempted again to ſpeak; but her words were inaudible. Her ſoul quivered on her lips; and ſupported by Hammond and Agatha, ſhe uttered a deep groan and expired.

With ſenſations of pity, grief, and horror, they laid her lifeleſs corſe on the earth, and kneeling by its ſide, commended her ſpirit to its God. Then, no longer able to ſupport the dreadful ſpectacle, they hurried from that part of the building, and returning to the aiſle which they had firſt entered, ſat down to compoſe their agitated ſpirits, and await the return of day, when they purpoſed to go to the cottage Hammond had mentioned, and remain there privately, if ſuffered to do ſo, till the enſuing night.—The dreadful ſcene juſt paſſed had made a deep and melancholy impreſſion on the minds of them both; and finding it impoſſible to baniſh its horrors from their remembrance, they experienced a relief from

from dwelling on the ſubject. "Never! O! "never!" ſaid Agatha, ſpeaking of the agonies the unhappy Madame Dorville had endured, "never may the ſting of ſelf-reproach "wound my boſom! Secure from that, whatever wreck my hopes may ſuſtain, whatever diſtreſſes I may be deſtined to encounter, *all* will not be miſery; a ray of light "ſhall break through the gloom, and chear "the ſcene. In Religion I can ſeek and obtain conſolation; in the ſoothings of pity "and friendſhip feel my anguiſh mitigated, "if not cured; but O! Hammond! no "friendly hand can draw forth the arrows "of affliction when they are barbed with "guilt!"

"Your pathetic wiſh, my Agatha," ſaid Hammond, "reminds me of ſome lines my "ſiſter gave me when a boy at ſchool. The "ſentiments are nearly the ſame as thoſe you "have uttered, though differently expreſſed. "Theſe were the lines, which, from being "learned in childhood, and given to me by "one ſo deſervedly dear, I can never for-"get."

O! grant

O! grant me Heaven! howe'er thy will,
My cup with bitterneſs ſhall fill,
Howe'er thy wiſdom ſhall deny
Each other good for which I ſigh,
O! grant—from ills the beſt defence——
A ſhield of *Conſcious Innocence!*

Then, though each ſtorm that others dread,
Should burſt on my devoted head;
Though every friend on earth were loſt,
And ev'ry flatt'ring proſpect croſt;
My peace ſhall know one ſure defence——
The ſhield of *Conſcious Innocence!*

In ev'ry ſcene ſupreme its power,
How ſhall it bleſs my parting hour!
Content, when thou ſhalt will, to die,
My Guardian Angel hov'ring nigh,
Shall eaſe the pangs that call me hence,
By whiſp'ring "*Conſcious Innocence!*"

Day at length breaking, they quitted the monaſtery, the appearance of which as the light diſcovered to them the looſe and mouldering ſtones which hung over their heads, made them ſhudder to reflect on the immminent danger of their ſituation during the night

—ſhaken as the building had been by the fury of the ſtorm.

Taking the path towards the cottage, they were met by a ſoldier, apparently bowed down by the weight of age and grief. Looking at Hammond earneſtly, "Surely," he ſaid, "your appearance beſpeaks you the Ameri-"can who wounded the inſolent and inhu-"man Morèe? If you are he, fly I charge "you, for vengeance purſues you. Every "houſe is ſearched throughout the Province. "Wonder not that I wiſh you to eſcape. I "had a daughter—ſole comfort of my age— "She was ſeduced and torn from my feeble "arms by the villain you ſtabbed. Fly then "—There is a thick foreſt near. Seek the "dens of wild beaſts rather than the haunts "of men—for man is ſavage here!"

The old man then ſitting down on the graſs, wiped a tear that had fallen on his furrowed cheek, and again urged them to haſten to the foreſt. Not daring, therefore, to purſue their former intentions, they fled as they were directed; Agatha looking behind her at every ſtep, and fancying every breath of wind

conveyed

conveyed the ſound of footſteps in purſuit of them.

Breathleſs and fatigued, they at length reached the foreſt in which Agatha had taken ſhelter the night before. Here, believing themſelves ſecure, they ſat down to reſt, when a noiſe at a diſtance alarmed them. They liſtened, and could diſtinguiſh the ſound of horſes' feet; and immediately after, looking around, diſcerned ſeveral horſemen not far from them. "Merciful Heaven preſerve us!" ſaid Agatha, "whither—whither ſhall we "fly?—" "We will ſeek a thicker part of "the foreſt," ſaid Hammond. Then flying, torn by briars, among the underwood, they loſt, for a time, the ſound of their purſuers, and were again indulging the hopes of ſafety, when the horſemen again approached, and by the exclamations of fury which they uttered, left them no room to doubt that they were actually in ſearch of them.

Flying for ſhelter yet farther from the beaten track, Hammond's foot ſlipped, and he fell among ſome briars, which he immediately diſcovered were placed over the mouth of a cavern, into which they could with eaſe deſcend.

ſcend. Not a moment was to be loſt. Their purſuers were in ſight; and, guided and ſupported by Hammond, Agatha deſcended with him a ſteep ſlope which led into the cavern. Having diſplaced the briars in their deſcent, leſt this ſhould lead to a diſcovery of their place of refuge, they again, though with ſome difficulty, ſpread them over the aperture, ſtanding on a ſtep which ſeemed to have been made in one ſide of the cave for that purpoſe. They now again heard the voices of the horſemen, and trembling leſt they ſhould by an accident ſimilar to Hammond's diſcover the cavern, they proceeded to explore a narrow paſſage, which they obſerved on one ſide of them, in hopes it might lead to ſome more diſtant and ſecure retreat. The paſſage was ſerpentine, low, and narrow, and ſo totally devoid of light, that with difficulty they groped their way along it; and nothing but a terror far greater than any this gloomy retreat could occaſion, would have given them courage to explore it: but ſmaller, and poſſibly ideal cauſes of fear ſhrink to nothing when known and real ones are apprehended.

—After

—After traverſing the winding path for ſome time, they were ſtruck by obſerving it become lighter, and by the glimmering of a lamp reflected on the ſtone. This ſubterraneous ſcene was therefore inhabited; and whether to proceed farther, or to continue where they now were till their purſuers might have left the foreſt, they were in doubt. At length, curioſity, added to the probability that it was the refuge of the unfortunate rather than the wicked, in a country where the innocent are perſecuted, and the barbarous and guilty roam at large, they ventured to proceed; and turning to the right from whence they obſerved the light, ſaw a large circular cavern, reſembling that which they had firſt entered, at the farther end of which ſat a venerable figure in the habit of a prieſt, reading by the light of a lamp placed on a ſtone table before him. The floor was of earth; and as they walked ſlowly and ſilently along, they had time to contemplate his figure before he obſerved them. Every furrow in his face bore the print of benevolence. One hand ſupported his head, while the other, laid

on

on his book, was now raiſed and then dropped again gradually, as the devotion excited by his miſſal inſpired him. Raiſing his eyes, at length, and obſerving Hammond and Agatha, he ſtarted, and roſe from his ſeat, while a bluſh rather of ſurprize than confuſion for a moment overſpread his face.

"Forgive us," ſaid Hammond, "that we "intrude on your retirement. Chance diſ-"covered to us the entrance to this cave; and "purſued by implacable enemies, we glad-"ly profited by the ſhelter it promiſed to af-"ford us."

"You are welcome, ſincerely welcome," ſaid the venerable prieſt, advancing towards them; "and I bleſs Heaven that my peace-"ful abode has given you ſhelter and protec-"tion." Then, obſerving the terror yet imprinted on Agatha's countenance, with an aſpect of mild concern, and an air of that genuine politeneſs which benevolence prompts and inſpires, he took her trembling hand with reſpectful tenderneſs, and led her to the ſeat he had quitted; when taking an earthen cup from a

corner

corner of the cave, and filling it with wine, he entreated her to partake of the trifling refreſhment which he was enabled to offer his gueſts; "for ſuch," he added, "I ſhall be "proud to conſider you." He now brought two large looſe ſtones, and, there being no other chair but that in which he had placed Agatha, offered one of them to Hammond, and took himſelf the other. "You are no doubt ſur-"prized," he continued, "to find an inha-"bitant of a ſubterraneous ſpot like this, and "it will perhaps recal to your minds the "ſcenes of poetry and romance; but we live "in a country, where, what would have been "deemed extravagant in the pages of fiction, "is now every day practiſed in real life. "Many are the families, that, dreading the "conſequences of their former declarations "of attachment to their King, have retired "to the woods; and there, ſubſiſting on ſuch "fruits and herbs as they caſually diſcover, "lead a life of wildneſs and diſmay—alarm-"ed at the approach of a human being, and "dreading a murderer in every one they meet. "Others there probably are, who like me

" have interred themſelves alive; and who,
" excluded from the light of day, bleſs a re-
" treat, which, in more proſperous times,
" they would have beheld with terror. In-
" tended from my infancy for the ſacred garb
" I wear, and glorying in a religion, the pure
" tenets of which I have laboured to teach
" others, I was marked for deſtruction. Whi-
" therſoever I fled I was perſecuted, myſelf
" and my profeſſion ridiculed, and, becauſe
" I ſcorned to deny what I firmly believed, I
" was branded with the name of hypocrite.
" Yet the time has been that the very perſons
" who gave me the odious appellation, look-
" ed up to me as a father, and delightedly
" confeſſed, that they owed to my inſtruc-
" tions the virtues, and, in conſequence, the
" happineſs of their lives. Convinced that
" Religion had loſt many votaries by the
" harſh and forbidding form under which ſhe
" has been too often repreſented, I endea-
" voured to paint her as ſhe is—mild, ſooth-
" ing, and conſolatory; to the innocent clad
" in perpetual ſmiles——ſoothing affliction,
" and heightening happineſs. True piety, I

" frequently

" frequently ſaid, forbids no one guiltleſs
" pleaſure, enjoins an abſtinence from no en-
" joyments but ſuch as would endanger our
" *real* happineſs even in this life: while by
" my example I endeavoured to enforce the
" practice of the innocent chearfulneſs my
" leſſons were deſigned to inculcate. I was
" a party in every innocent feſtivity. I look-
" ed on as the youths and maidens danced,
" and invited them to purſue the harmleſs
" paſtime. I liſtened to the long ſtories of
" the aged, and pleaſed them by my patient
" attention. I gave little rewards to the chil-
" dren who excelled in any infantine feat;
" and "Father Albert is coming" made eve-
" ry little nerve be ſtrained, and every effort of
" ſkill be exerted to obtain applauſe. I men-
" tion not this from vanity or oſtentation,
" but to ſhew from what a height of happi-
" neſs—beloved as I was, and regarded as a
" parent by the flock committed to my charge,
" —to ſhew from what a height of happi-
" neſs I am fallen. Thoſe very children, in-
" ſtigated by their relations, have ſince hoot-
" ed as I paſſed them; and inſtead of " dear

" Father Albert" as I was once called, I have
" been loaded with every term of abuſe and
" execration which the moſt infernal heart can
" dictate, yet *my* conduct has been unchang-
" ed. I have not, that I am conſcious, neg-
" lected a duty, or committed a crime: " to
" do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly
" with my God" has been, as far as in me
" lay, my conſtant practice. At length I
" believed it my duty to fly from a torrent
" which I was unable to ſtem. My life was
" threatened—and though few may be the
" years that are given me to ſojourn on
" earth, and though with the calm reſignation
" of a Chriſtian I truſt I am capable of meet-
" ing my end, yet not to provide for my ſafe-
" ty when my death would neither reclaim
" the wicked, nor ſtrengthen the cauſe of
" piety, I held to be criminal, and adverſe to
" the principles of the faith I profeſſed. This
" retreat, from my intimacy with the Prior
" of a Monaſtery ſituated on the extremity
" of this foreſt, was well known to me, and
" perſecuted on every ſide, I fled to it as a
" laſt and only reſource. Communicating,

" by

" by a paſſage ſimilar to that through which
" you paſſed, with the refectory of the con-
" vent, and from thence with another cavern
" which was the cellar of the monks during
" their reſidence here, I have wine enough
" to laſt probably during the few years of my
" ſolitary exiſtence——enough too, to ſhare
" with my welcome gueſts," purſued he, bow-
ing, and ſmiling complacently; " and, at-
" tired as a peaſant, I ſometimes go to one,
" ſometimes to another village or town to
" purchaſe proviſions, which a little ſtock of
" wealth that I providentially diſcovered,
" when digging for roots in the garden of the
" forſaken monaſtery, enables me to do; but
" more frequently I explore the foreſt in
" ſearch of wild fruits and herbs.

" Thus, though innocent of crime, I en-
" dure in part the terrors of the guilty, and
" ſkulk under diſguiſes, which *they* only
" ought to be forced to aſſume. But the
" ways of Heaven are juſt. Let the ſons of
" vice triumph! Let them brandiſh their in-
" ſtruments of deſtruction over the head of
" trembling Virtue! In the breaſt of each

" there lurks an adder whoſe ſting is worſe
" than death—worſe than any torments their
" power and malice can inflict. O! may it
" not ſting in vain!—warned by its tor-
" ments of thoſe which are to come, may
" they repent and be forgiven! Yes! may
" Heaven of its mercy pity and pardon a de-
" luded and infatuated people—a people who
" know not what they do!"

The venerable appearance of their kind hoſt had greatly intereſted the travellers in his behalf, and this ſhort deſcription of his ſituation and ſentiments confirmed the favourable impreſſion. With equal ingenuouſneſs they gave him a brief relation of the different events which had befallen themſelves, and in particular of the circumſtance which had driven them to take ſhelter in his cave.

The good prieſt, much affected by the recital, conjured them not to quit their preſent retreat till the ſearch after Hammond might be ſuppoſed to be at an end, and they could purſue their journey with a probability of ſafety, requeſting them in the mean time, to partake of the ſimple fare he was enabled to

ſet

ſet before them. They gratefully accepted his offer, and, thus happily ſcreened from danger, enjoying the ſociety of each other, and of one, whoſe converſation, enlivened by the chearful ſerenity of conſcious virtue, and tinctured by univerſal benevolence, rendered him every minute more and more an object of their eſteem and veneration, they were comparatively happy.—Yet when Agatha's grateful heart would have exulted in the bleſſings thus providentially beſtowed, her anxiety for her parents, and fears for their ſafety again embittered every comfort; and neither the tender arguments of Hammond nor the friendly hopes ſuggeſted by Father Albert could calm her apprehenſions.

When Father Albert's time piece warned him that it was time to retire to reſt, he ſpread a coverlet on the ground, and making as convenient a bed as he could, inſiſted on Agatha's taking that, and retired himſelf with Hammond to different parts of the cavern.

CHAP. XII.

AGATHA was now alone. The lamp burning on the ſtone table before her faintly lighted the ſpacious vaulted apartment. No ſound was heard; and in the ſilence that reigned around her, ſhe felt a depreſſion of ſpirits to which ſhe had hitherto been a ſtranger. Time had rendered her little ſolitary cell in the convent not only familiar but dear to her. But there, the wind at intervals ſhook her caſement. The bell to call her to Matins, though once heard with terror, had been ſince heard and expected with delight, ſince it bad her join in that devotion ſhe lived but to pay.—But here—in this ſubterraneous apartment, no ſound broke the dead ſtillneſs of the night, or diſſipated the images of terror which fancy in a thouſand fantaſtic ſhapes preſented to her imagination; while her mind, harraſſed as it had been of late, was but too well ſuited to receive the gloomy impreſſions. At length, by an effort of reaſon and piety, ſhe chaced

the

the fearful ſhadows from her imagination, and commending herſelf to Heaven, lay down on her humble bed, and ſunk into a ſweet and refreſhing ſleep from which ſhe did not awake till morning.

At an early hour ſhe was joined by Father Albert and Hammond, and the little group, after uniting in prayers and praiſes to the diſpenſer of every comfort, ſat down to their temperate breakfaſt, and paſſed this day as they had done the laſt, in converſation equally inſtructive and delightful; and a friendſhip which in the world might have been months, perhaps years, in forming, from a ſimilarity of ſituations was already ſo cloſely cemented, that the good prieſt was regarded as a father by his gueſts, while he conſidered them as children, whoſe ſafety he would rejoice to provide for, though at the hazard of his own.

On the day following, Father Albert's ſmall ſtock of proviſions being nearly exhauſted, he aſſumed his accuſtomed diſguiſe, and going to a neighbouring village, returned to them, after an abſence of ſome hours, with a freſh ſupply.

Hammond had concealed nothing from the good prieſt, and had confeſſed the attachment which had taken place in his own and Agatha's heart before they knew that any duty would compel them to renounce each other. Accident revived the ſubject on the father's return.

"Does it not ſeem," ſaid Hammond, appealing to him with an air of timid ſupplication, "does it not appear as if Heaven had "interpoſed in my behalf, and, throwing "down the barriers which divided us, ſmiled "on our love, and deſigned an union to which "it has thus removed obſtacles which once "appeared inſurmountable? Has it not, by "a chain of events next to miraculous, given "my Agatha to my care, and placed us both "under the protection of———a Prieſt?"

Father Albert was ſilent. Agatha, greatly agitated, was incapable of ſpeaking, and Hammond, not daring to look at her, again tremblingly repeated his queſtion.

"Alas!" replied Father Albert, "how "ſhall I adviſe, when my inclination and "reaſon will perhaps point different ways; "and when the happineſs of thoſe, already

"dear

" dear to me as if they were actually my
" children, is at ſtake?—you, my daughter,
" was, by your mother's vow, devoted to
" God. You have fulfilled her vow; have,
" in the ſenſe in which her word was given,
" devoted yourſelf to Heaven. Fate has re-
" ſtored you to the world. Perhaps it would
" be now no crime to devote yourſelf to
" Heaven in another, and, as I have always
" held, the trueſt ſenſe of the word—by a
" life which would render you uſeful to ſo-
" ciety, and reward the faithful affection of
" one who deſerves to be happy. Yet with
" doubt and heſitation do I offer ſuggeſtions
" by which I wiſh you not to be ſwayed. To
" your own hearts I appeal——if they forbid it
" not——"

" Enough——enough," ſaid Hammond, ſtarting from his ſeat in tranſport; " you do
" not diſapprove, and Heaven itſelf ſanctions
" my wiſhes! My Agatha, ſpeak!——Yet do
" not ſpeak—that ſilence, my flattering heart
" aſſures me, bids me be happy—the happieſt
" of human beings!"

" Indulge not the idea," replied Agatha;
" for never can I have an earthly huſband."

"Cruel! cruel Agatha!" ſaid Hammond, awaking from his ſhort dream of bliſs, "you "never loved me. You might make me "happy—without the ſhadow of a crime "might make me happy! Yet, exulting in "your power, you triumph in my miſery. "No, you never loved me."

"Indeed, indeed," ſaid Agatha, burſting into tears, "I have not deſerved this. Can "it be Hammond—my friend—my deliverer "who ſpeaks thus?—Without the ſhadow of "a crime ſay you? O! if without the ſhadow "of a crime I could make you happy, can "you believe that I would heſitate a mo-"ment? be calm, conſult your own reaſon, "and you will know and acknowledge that I "would not. Dearer than the life for the "preſervation of which you hazarded your "own,—generouſly, nobly hazarded it—do I "prize your happineſs; I would ſubmit to "any worldly miſery to procure it, if it were "ſo to be procured. But not even you ſhall "tempt me to violate my duty; and, by a "ſubterfuge as mean as it would be crimi-"nal, to draw down on both our heads the

"wrath

" wrath of Heaven. A mad populace have
" unbarred the gates of my ſanctuary, have
" forced me to abandon it: but could that
" action diſpenſe with my performance of
" vows, the awful ſolemnity of which will be
" for ever engraven on my ſoul? believe
" not that you would be happy were I to
" conſent to your preſent wiſhes! the heart-
" rending idea that I had violated a vow, had
" committed a crime, to make you happy,
" would haunt your mind perpetually, and
" embitter every promiſed bleſſing: dreadful
" is it to lay to our own charge the guilt of
" thoſe we love. And, after all, is there a
" bleſſing in a life, whoſe longeſt duration is
" a few fleeting years, which deſerves to be
" purchaſed by the chance even of offending
" Him whoſe puniſhments and rewards are
" *Eternal?*"

Agatha ſtopped; and Hammond, ſtruck by the ſolemnity of her manner, and the ſuperiority of her virtue, was ſilent and abaſhed.

" Excellent young woman!" at laſt exclaimed Father Albert, " how little do I
" appear in my own eyes! I, whoſe weakneſs

" could plead in extenuation of a crime, be-
" cauſe I believed it would promote your
" happineſs! who, by a 'mean ſubterfuge,'
" could, if not adviſe, at leaſt permit you to
" forfeit a vow! but by ſpecious arguments
" we too often deceive ourſelves into an ap-
" probation of our wiſhes. An unbiaſſed
" inveſtigation of their inherent rectitude
" ought to precede all our actions; and, di-
" veſting ourſelves of every partial prejudice,
" duty and reaſon ſhould be our only direc-
" tors."

" O Father Albert!" ſaid Hammond,
" plead too for me! I have accuſed my Aga-
" tha, angel as ſhe is! I have accuſed her of
" cruelty—have ſaid——"

" My Hammond," interrupted Agatha, holding out her hand, and advancing towards him, " ſay no more—all is forgiven—for-
" give me too, if any thing that I have ſaid
" has hurt my beſt friend—friend! my Ham-
" mond—let me repeat the ſweet word, and
" be grateful to Heaven that forbids us not
" the dear privilege of friendſhip! and now,
" for the *ſecond laſt* time, continued ſhe, forc-

" ing

" ing a ſmile through the tears which yet " gliſtened in her eyes, we will cloſe this " painful ſubject."

She then gave her other hand to Father Albert, who, as he reſpectfully received it, gazed on her with a mixture of ſurprize and veneration, as on a being of a ſuperior order.

But the ſerenity of the little party was not immediately recovered. Hammond, ſanctioned by the reluctantly-given conſent of the kind prieſt, who, accuſtomed to diſpenſe felicity, knew not how to forbid it, had given the reins to hopes, which, once indulged, could not, without a ſevere ſtruggle, be again relinquiſhed. While Agatha, at the ſame time that ſhe ſuffered ſeverely from the pain ſhe was compelled to inflict on her preſerver, was but too ſenſible at that fatal moment, of the continuance of a love which ſhe had believed for ever ſubdued, and trembled at her own emotions. But in a heart long and firmly devoted to the cauſe of virtue, the empire of the feelings which oppoſe it, is weak and tranſitory. Agatha's reaſon and piety in a moment reſumed their ſway, and triumphed over

over her wiſhes; and ſhe replied to Hammond with a firmneſs which at once diſſipated the flattering illuſion.

Almoſt a fortnight had elapſed, and Father Albert, apprehenſive for the ſafety of his friends, and happy in their ſociety, was yet unwilling to conſent to their departure, and had prevailed upon them to remain his gueſts ſome days longer, when, on his going one morning to purchaſe proviſions, they were alarmed by his not returning at the accuſtomed time. They went repeatedly to the mouth of the cavern, and looked around for him; but to no purpoſe. Evening arrived —yet ſtill he came not. And now, more than ever alarmed, they determined to go in ſearch of him, though they knew not whither: they were ignorant what road he had taken, or to what village or town had purpoſed to go; and to enquire of any one they might chance to meet would equally endanger his ſafety and their own. But, in a ſtate of anxiety and ſuſpenſe, every plan, however vague, ſeems preferable to remaining paſſive. Believing it poſſible, that, fatigued by the heat

heat of the day, a ſudden illneſs might have ſeized him, they reſolved to ſeek him in every part of the foreſt. With this view they left the cavern, but had no ſooner quitted it, than they were convinced, by obſerving its ſituation, ſurrounded by brakes, and diſtant from every beaten path, that if they once ventured to ſtray any diſtance from it, all endeavours to find it again would be fruitleſs; eſpecially as the night would overtake them before they had traverſed any conſiderable part of the foreſt; by which means, if Father Albert ſhould return, he would be in equal terror on their account, and they might, in all probability never ſee him more: they were therefore compelled to remain in this painful ſuſpence—liſtening every moment at the mouth of the cave, and in every ruſtling of the leaves endeavouring to diſcover the ſound of his footſteps.

Hour after hour thus paſſed till twelve o'clock arrived. Still, however, they cheriſhed the hope, that in the morning he might return to them; poſſibly, detained by accident, he had been benighted, and loſing himſelf

himſelf among ſome of the wildeſt parts of the foreſt, had been unable, during the darkneſs of the night, to diſcover his retreat. In the anxiety and agitation which they had endured during the greater part of the day, they had not even thought of taking any refreſhment; but now, all expectation of ſeeing him that night at an end, they endeavoured to make themſelves as eaſy as poſſible, and to await with patience the return of day, whoſe welcome light would they flattered themſelves reſtore to them their venerable friend. They now therefore took their lamp, and proceeded towards the cellar of the monks, in order to fetch ſome wine and the few proviſions that remained—but ſcarcely had they aſcended the winding ſteps which led to the refectory, when they were alarmed by the ſound of voices iſſuing from the cellar into which they were going. Apprehending with too great an appearance of reaſon, that Father Albert had been taken, and his retreat diſcovered, they turned back immediately, and, fearing the light of their lamp might betray them, ſhould the perſons, whoever they were, proceed

ceed to explore any of the other ſubterraneous paſſages, they blew it out, and groping their way as ſilently and quickly as poſſible to the part of the cavern they inhabited, with all the calmneſs and collection of mind they could aſſume, began to deliberate on the ſteps they ſhould take to enſure their ſafety. To quit the cavern at the other aperture might be hazardous—perſons might be ſtationed near it; or, at leaſt, while ſome explored the cellar, others might remain above to receive tidings of the diſcoveries they made; and, to continue where they were, as there was an uninterrupted communication of their cave with the refectory, ſeemed equally dangerous. At length, in hopes the other aperture, from being covered with briars, might have eſcaped diſcovery, they determined to ſtand on the ſlope near it, ready to eſcape into the foreſt ſhould they hear any one in the paſſage, or to retreat into the cave, and to endeavour to effect their eſcape through the other paſſage, ſhould any one attempt to remove the brakes.

When they had arrived at the place they had fixed upon, prepared to advance or retreat as they

ſhould

ſhould find it neceſſary, they could diſtinguiſh ſeveral voices above ground not far from them; and the converſation, which they could not often diſtinctly hear, was interrupted by frequent burſts of laughter.

At length, the party above ground ſeemed to be joined by that which had been below, and they heard with inexpreſſible ſatisfaction that the ſearch was intended to be abandoned for the preſent. But this momentary exultation at their own eſcape was ſoon converted into diſtreſs for the fate of the unfortunate Father Albert, which the laſt words they diſtinguiſhed left them little reaſon to doubt was by that time determined. "We have un-"kennelled the old fox," were the words they heard, "and are certainly welcome to the le-"gacy of his wine, when he has no longer "any occaſion for it." This witticiſm having received its due ſhare of applauſe, the ſons of LIBERTY, elated by the wine they had copiouſly drank, and by the good fortune of having ſeized and murdered a PRIEST, departed in high good humour, while the foreſt reſounded with their vociferous mirth.

When

When they were gone, and the barbarous tumult was ſucceeded by the ſolemn ſtillneſs of midnight, Hammond and Agatha again conſulted on the ſteps they ſhould take to provide for their ſafety. From one of the expreſſions they had heard, they had every reaſon to believe that, as ſoon as it was light, the cavern would be again viſited and its paſſages explored. To remain there, therefore, was out of the queſtion; and whether or not the purſuit after Hammond was at an end was uncertain; whether too they could fly, or to whom have recourſe for protection, they were equally at a loſs. But the foreſt now viſited, and all its haunts probably ſearched in expectation of finding other ſubterraneous dwellings, ſeemed of all others the moſt dangerous ſituation. At length they determined to go to the benevolent cottagers, to whom Hammond had before intended to apply, to aſk for temporary aſſiſtance and protection. But dark as was the night, it was next to impoſſible to find the road, or perhaps to diſcover a path which would lead them out of the foreſt; and, already in want of food, how

ſhould

ſhould they ſubſiſt, if, unable to find a path, they ſhould be neceſſitated to conceal themſelves in ſome part of the foreſt during the next day. As, therefore, in all probability, the whole ſtock of wine was not yet carried away, Hammond prevailed upon Agatha to return with him through the cave, every part of its paſſages being familiar to them, to take a ſmall ſupply with them.

Agatha, trembling violently, and leaning on Hammond, prepared, once more, to traverſe the gloomy paſſages; and walking with fearful haſte, they ſoon reached the ſteps leading to the refectory. Before they proceeded farther, they liſtened for ſome minutes in ſilent apprehenſion, leſt ſome one ſhould have been left behind to keep watch for his companions—an idea which ſtruck them both at the ſame inſtant, but which had not occurred to either when they ventured to return. At length, however, they aſcended the ſteps; and arrived at the laſt, they liſtened again!—but every thing was ſtill. They heard no one breathe—and ſtruggling with their fears, they had half croſſed the refectory, when they ſtumbled

ſtumbled againſt ſomething on the ground before them; and an hoarſe voice inarticulately muttered an oath on being touched; but, endeavouring to riſe, ſunk down again, overpowered, as it appeared, by intoxication. Though this was probably ſome one, who, having drank more largely than his companions, was unable to follow them, and in that ſtate had fallen aſleep, and not, as they had apprehended, any one ſtationed there as Sentinel, they dared not proceed; but haſtening back the way they came, quitted the cavern, and entered the foreſt—wandering only as they were directed by chance, and without a ray of light to guide their devious ſteps.

When they had walked ſome time, ignorant to what part of the foreſt they had ſtrayed, they ſat down, ſpent and weary, on the trunk of a fallen tree, and there awaited the return of day.

The morning light giving them a view of their ſituation, they found themſelves on the ſkirts of the foreſt, within ſight of a caſtle which Hammond remembered to have ſeen on his firſt arrival in Auvergne, and which,

during his reſidence in the Province, had ſhared the fate of many others, and fallen a ſacrifice to popular fury. Its walls were yet ſtanding, but every thing of value in and near it had been either carried away or deſtroyed. In its ruins Hammond however propoſed that they ſhould take ſhelter till the evening, when they would once more attempt to gain the friendly cottage. Before they left the foreſt, they gathered ſome wild berries, and with this ſlender ſupply of food, proceeded without delay to the caſtle.

"That caſtle," ſaid Hammond, pointing to it as they went along, "was, a twelvemonth "ſince, the reſidence of the Marquis de Vil-"lorme, a nobleman in the flower of his age, "who inherited it from a long line of anceſ-"tors not leſs illuſtrious for their virtues than "their rank. His wife, one of the lovelieſt "and moſt accompliſhed women of the age, "terrified at the menaces of the mob who "waited to ſeize her huſband on his return "from hunting, was deprived of her reaſon, "and in that miſerable ſtate received inſults "which humanity ſhudders but to think of,

"The

" The marquis returning, beheld her, her
" hair diſhevelled and her clothes torn, be-
" wailing in a frantic manner her murdered
" huſband. ' Wretches! Devils!' he ex-
" claimed, as he beheld the mob ſurrounding
" her, ' what—who are you!—My life! my
" love! my Julia!' flying to her arms—' I
" am not murdered—I am here to protect,
" to ſhield, to die for thee!' ' Here?' re-
" plied his Julia, ' No—no, they ſtabbed
" you here—and here—and here'—pointing
" to her heart. ' Come, come,' ſaid one of
" the mob, ' no more of this fond fooling.
" You are wanted, Sir, and muſt leave my
" lady your wife for good and all.' ' Alive
" you ſhall not tear me from her,' he replied;
" death, death only ſhall divide us.' One of
" the wretches then endeavouring to force
" him from her, wounded his arm, and the
" unhappy lady, ſeeing the blood flow, wept
" over the wound, and from the relief of
" tears, recovered her ſenſes for a few mi-
" nutes—but recovered them only to awake
" to a ſenſe of miſery the moſt exquiſite.
" Her huſband was torne from her arms, and

" murdered

" murdered in her ſight. She flew to his
" mangled corſe, and with an eloquence that
" might have melted a ſavage, ' Is it come
" to this?' ſhe cried; 'Have they taken him
" from me? Is he indeed gone—gone for
" ever? Thoſe lips that were wont to utter
" every kindneſs cloſed for ever!—' Then
" kiſſing them—' No—they are not yet cold
" —ſee—they move!—yet quiver with the
" vows they made to ſave thy Julia.—But all
" in vain—they would not ſuffer thee!—Who
" would have thought it? We were once ſo
" happy. Madam,' turning to a woman
" who ſtood by her, eyeing her frantic grief
" with cold curioſity, ' you know not half
" how kind he was—how I loved him!——
" But I hope Ladies and Gentlemen, you are
" all happy—I was once—and our little boy
" —but then he had a father, and ſo, and ſo
" —But God bleſs you all—and I will bleſs
" you too, bid him but live!' Then once
" more attempting to kiſs his lifeleſs lips, ſhe
" gave a deep groan, and expired without
" another ſtruggle. The infant was, in the
" mean time, conveyed away by an old and

" faithful

" faithful nurſe, and perhaps yet lives to la-
" ment his murdered parents. The houſe
" was ranſacked, and thoſe are the remains.
" This dreadful tale was recited in my hear-
" ing, with dry eyes, my Agatha, by ſome
" of thoſe who were preſent at the horrid
" ſpectacle."

Agatha, deeply affected by the melancholy relation, had ſcarcely ſtrength or courage to approach the ſcene where theſe horrors had been acted. Hammond, not leſs moved, wept with her; and with ſilence and dejection they approached the deſolate manſion, through what had once been a large paved court, but the chequered ſtones of which had been many of them taken away, and others broken in pieces to glut the ſenſeleſs rage of the deſtroyers. Through a portico, the ſtrong and ſtately pillars of which had bid defiance to the blows they had received, they entered what had once been a ſaloon. A ſmall part of the furniture yet remained. In one corner lay, covered with duſt and cobwebs, part of a broken frame with embroidered ſatin faſtened to it; in another, the ſhattered body of a

harpſichord; and beneath it, a muſic book, which had entirely eſcaped the fury of the ravagers. Agatha opened it—On the blank ſpaces of ſeveral of the leaves ſome jagged lines were drawn in pencil, apparently by an infant's hand. "Ah!" ſaid Agatha, as ſhe contemplated the wayward ſtrokes, "with "what delight perhaps thy wretched mother "gazed on her infant as its little fingers traced "thoſe lines, and kiſſed the hand that formed "them! Unhappy child! an orphan and an "alien! that hand ſhall never more feel the "tender preſſure of a mother's lips! No— "ſhe is taken from thee ere thou art enabled "to brave the ſtorms of life—But may He "who is a father to the fatherleſs protect and "bleſs thee!—Thou haſt no mother, and a "ſtranger ſhall offer up her prayers for thee. "Alas: while I bewail thy fate, I myſelf "have loſt——dreadful thought!—yet not "for ever—No—merciful Heaven forbid!" —The remembrance of her own ſufferings, of her parents loſt, perhaps for ever, now obliterated every other idea; and, in an agony not to be deſcribed, ſhe let fall the book, and

and dropping on her knees, implored Heaven to ſpare their lives.

Hammond, by every argument he could ſuggeſt, endeavoured to calm her ſorrow and diſſipate her fears. He repreſented to her, that Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, when they had quitted the Province of Auvergne, as ſhe had reaſon to believe they had by the time which had elapſed before their unfortunate meſſenger was diſpatched to her, were in little danger of being recognized during their journey; and that while, by unavailing terrors, ſhe was injuring the health of one on whom their happineſs depended, they perhaps were already in England, and enduring no troubles but thoſe which ſprang from uneaſineſs on her account.

When Agatha was ſufficiently recovered for Hammond to leave her, he went to the well of the caſtle, and in a broken tea cup brought her the only refreſhment he was enabled to give her, and indeed all they could obtain during the day, as, till the twilight commenced, they dared not purſue their journey.

The day paſſed in melancholy reflections, which every object around them conſpired to encreaſe. The memorials of the once happy inhabitants of the ruined dwelling—the view of the court where their lives were miſerably terminated, and the dreadful ſcene had paſſed, ſtruck a *damp* to their ſpirits, which they in vain ſtrove to diſpel; while the cruel death of the venerable and benevolent Father Albert—their own uncertain fate——the diſtreſſes they had already encountered, and thoſe for which they might yet be reſerved, completed the gloomy picture.

Evening at length approached, but before they left the caſtle, their curioſity led them to take a melancholy ſurvey of thoſe parts of the building they had not yet examined. At the farther end of the ſaloon was a door, which with ſome difficulty, they opened, and which led them through a veſtibule to another apartment, ſmaller, but which had been apparently more elegantly finiſhed than the ſaloon they firſt entered. The ſilver damaſk which had covered the walls was not entirely gone—a few ſcattered ſhreds yet remained here and there.

there. The furniture, except one broken inlaid table, had been all taken away—but on the wall on one ſide of the room, there yet hung a picture, which appeared to have been taken for the Marquis and Marchioneſs. A lady, beautiful and intereſting, dreſſed in a robe of pale blue ſatin, was ſitting on a ſopha, contemplating with maternal fondneſs an infant that lay on her lap, and, ſmiling in her face, graſped her finger with its little hand. The Marquis entering behind was gazing on the ſcene before him with a look of ineffable tenderneſs. His appearance was marked with dignity, yet dignity ſoftened by ſenſibility. "Unfortunate pair!" ſaid Agatha, as ſhe ſurveyed the picture before her, "you de-
"ſerved a better fate!—but there is a world
"of retribution—and again and again ſhall
"the prayers of the ſtrangers who ſought an
"aſylum in your deſerted manſion, aſcend
"for the preſervation of the infant ye have
"left." The canvaſs ſhook as ſhe ſpoke.—
"Bleſs! bleſs you for the prayer!" ſaid a voice which ſeemed to ſpeak from behind it—and at that moment a door by the ſide of

it

it opened, and a decrepid old man entered leaning on a crutch. Agatha was ſpeechleſs with aſtoniſhment, and the old man repeated his benediction. "I was Intendant," proceeded he, "to the father of that very no-
"bleman. Many and many are the times
"that I have taken him on my knee, and
"bleſſed the fate that gave a ſon, and ſuch a
"ſon! to my kind maſter. From his child-
"hood he had no thought but to bleſs the
"poor, and make his ſervants and all around
"him happy. Then he was ſo tender-heart-
"ed, he would not have hurt a worm!——
"When he came to his eſtate, and married
"that ſweet lady, his poor father, though
"dead and gone, was never forgotten—he
"would cry over his grave, and ſay to me,
"But Lawrence, we will do every thing he
"wiſhed, though he is taken from us and ſees
"not." His deceaſed father's favourite dog
"was one of his deareſt friends, and my dear
"lady's eyes were ſwoln with weeping when
"he died. Then their child was the ſweeteſt
"infant! and it is gone, God knows whither.
"I had hoped to die in their ſervice—with my

laſt

" laſt breath to have given them a bleſſing,
" and have left them behind me proſperous
" and happy! but they were murdered—
" barbarouſly murdered! curſed by the
" mouths they fed, ſlaughtered by the hands
" they filled with plenty; and that little bit
" of ground is all that's left them! there,
" (pointing to a part of the garden) there
" they lie. I was gone to overlook another
" of my Lord's eſtates when the horrible
" deed was done. O! had I been preſent,
" old and feeble as I am, they ſhould not
" have killed him: no, this arm, ſtrengthen-
" ed by a grateful heart, ſhould have regain-
" ed its youthful vigour—the villains ſhould
" have felt it, or have taken firſt a life I
" I ſhould have gloried to loſe for him. Now,
" old and paſt labour, deſpoiled of the ſmall
" property I had ſaved in the family of my
" benefactor, I ſubſiſt on the charity of a diſ-
" tant relation, and every evening viſit and
" cry over the grave of my maſter, and look
" at and talk to his picture. They may kill
" me for it if they will; but my life is no bleſ-
" ſing to me, and therefore, perhaps, they
" ſpare it."

This

This moving though artleſs teſtimony of the virtues of thoſe whoſe ſufferings had already but too deeply affected her, in the preſent weak ſtate of her ſpirits was more than Agatha could ſuſtain. Hammond ſaw her agitation, and, fearing its conſequences, with a voice that faltered with his own feelings, bad farewell to the faithful domeſtic, and forcing a few Louis into his hand, caught Agatha's arm, and hurried with her from the fatal ſcene.

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